

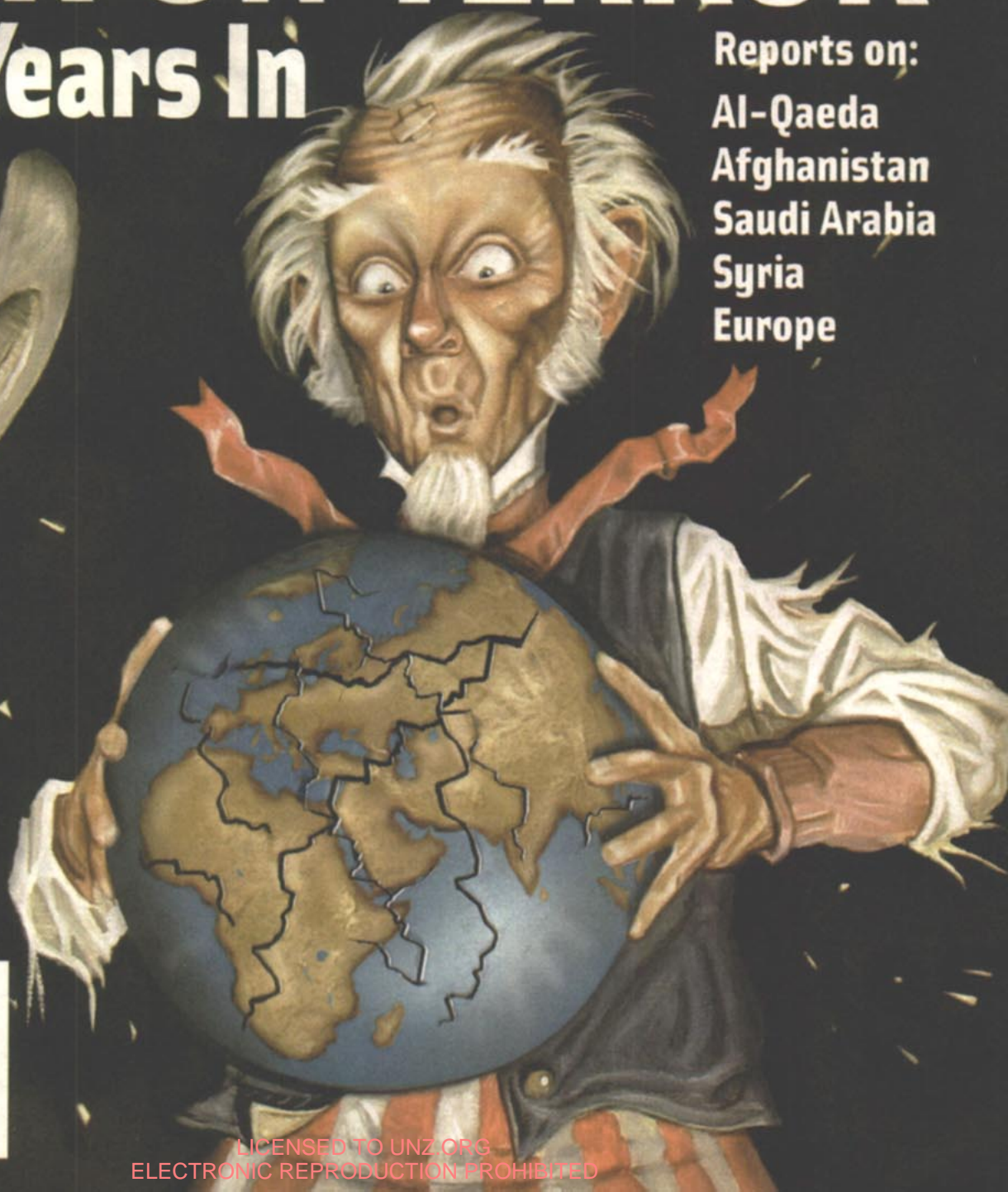
SEPTEMBER 22, 2003

The American Conservative

WAR ON TERROR

Two Years In

Reports on:
Al-Qaeda
Afghanistan
Saudi Arabia
Syria
Europe



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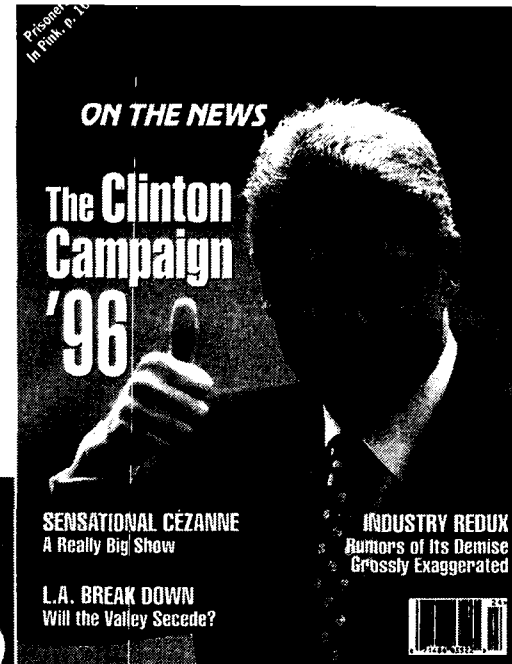
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Contents

September 22, 2003 / Vol. 2, No. 18



CHRIS HIERS

[AL-QAEDA]

The Jihadi War

BY PHILIP GIRALDI Al-Qaeda is scattered but no less powerful. Page 8

[SAUDI ARABIA]

The Coming Crescent Revolution

BY RICHARD CUMMINGS Bin Laden targets the tottering House of Saud. Page 9

[AFGHANISTAN]

War Before Last

BY SRDIA TRIFKOVIC The weak Karzai regime cedes ground to a resurgent Taliban. Page 12

[SYRIA]

Road from Damascus

BY ANDERS STRINDBERG Syria wanted to be an ally in the War on Terror—until Washington said no. Page 14

COLUMNS

6 Patrick J. Buchanan: Indiana Jones & The Real World

30 Taki: J. Lo and the B-Listers

NEWS & VIEWS

4 Fourteen Days: Recall & Revolution; Voting for Babies; Dancing in the Streets

7 Editorial: Two Years into the War on Terror

ARTICLES

16 Leon Hadar: Going it alone—and failing

18 Uwe Siemon-Netto: Europe and its Muslim migrants

19 W. Wesley McDonald: Russell Kirk's classic turns 50.

ARTS & LETTERS

23 Steve Sailer: Kevin Costner goes West.

24 Matthew G. Alexander: Secret policing's unsleeping eye

26 Justin Raimondo: War on terror or war on freedom?

28 Derek Leebaert: The new isolationism

[POLITICS]

RECALL MADNESS

John Adams famously wrote, "There never was a democracy that did not commit suicide," and the nation he helped birth may yet prove him right.

The California recall is no mortal blow to the body politic. But it does introduce a tendency more revolutionary than republican. The electoral carnival that makes room for a body-builder, a porn king, an Indian chief, and 131 other colorful cast-members may seem a triumph of grassroots activism—if we envy Italy its disposable constitutions, France its five republics, or Singapore its parliamentary slugfests.

Republicans, more zealous to oust a vulnerable Democrat than to ponder the founders' arguments against direct democracy, have bought into this radical brand of populism. At best, it will hand them an untested governor only half sworn to their creed. At worst, and more likely, it will make space in American politics for the kind of electoral turbulence—at odds with conservatism's traditionalist temperament—whereby anyone with pockets deep enough to fund a petition drive can replace majority with plurality.

Time's Joe Klein noted on "Meet the Press," "What you need to sustain a democracy is something that we journalists hate, and that is a certain amount of consistency." Those able to look deeper into the past or longer into the future would have agreed, set the cyclone down, and prepared in earnest to replace in Davis in 2006. The price to California would have been democracy's profit.

[FAMILY]

MORE KIDS, MORE VOTES

Europe's collapsing birthrate and its attendant problems are easy to diagnose but frustratingly difficult to cure. The common approach (besides calling for more immigration) is—as the London *Times* has called it—"paying the stork."



That is, government subsidies and tax breaks for women who bear more than one child. Such schemes have indeed met with some modest success—especially in France and Scandinavia—although the Scandinavian experience suggests the effects diminish over time. The verdict: necessary, but not sufficient.

Enter the German Family Association. Its quixotic, but politically savvy, proposal is: let children vote. Paraphrasing the group's executive director, NPR reports, "[I]f children had that right, politicians would consider them constituents ... [which] could lead to policies that make life easier for parents, and that might reverse the dropping birth rate in Germany."

The objections are obvious, not least that most children lack the ability to make reasoned political decisions. So how could children's suffrage work in practice? Free Democrat politician Klaus Houft, who supports the measure, says, "The answer is simple. The parents are trustees of the child's right to vote."

Fortifying parents' electoral clout is the crux of the matter, and it has made the right enemies. Jutta Duempe Krueger of the Green Party argues, "[I]t would strengthen a rather conservative con-

cept of family ... It would also discriminate against childless people."

Of course, modern European policies and culture now favor childlessness. Hence the birth dearth. Whether this idea—which will come before Parliament but almost certainly fail—is an appropriate corrective is debatable. It is politically impractical and, in the end, perhaps undesirable. But it is encouraging. To avoid demographic catastrophe, the Old Continent requires just such innovative, radical solutions.

[CULTURE]

TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

Recently we saw a bumper sticker that eloquently captured all the ambivalences of assimilation. Commemorating an Hispanic U.S. Marine killed in Iraq, the sticker was divided into three sections. On the left were the Mexican flag, a statement in Spanish, and the 21-year-old's name. On the right were the American flag, the same statement in English, and the dates of his birth and death. Caught in the middle, as it were, was the soldier himself, via his handsome official Marine Corps photo.

"In Honor of Our Hero! Our Aztec warrior!" read the bilingual caption. Leave

aside a moment the irony of invoking the Aztecs in reference to a Western imperial venture. ("Conquistador" would have been more like it.) For his eulogists, at least, the marine had a dual identity, centuries deep. (This apparently despite Mexico's well-publicized opposition to the war.) For them, he had two languages, two nations, two flags.

But there would have been only one to drape his coffin. This brave young man fought and died in the service of his country, the United States, and deserves to be remembered that way—indivisible.

[DEMOCRACY]

DANCING IN THE STREETS

If a reality show turned riot is any indication, hopes that our Iraqi makeover would seed a springtime of Arab democracy have been dealt a taste of, well, reality. "Superstar"—the Middle Eastern version of "American Idol"—was a televised music competition that reduced 11,000 wannabes to three finalists from Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan as each week millions registered their votes by telephone and Internet. The process ran smoothly until the semifinals when the Lebanese frontrunner was eliminated. Furious fans brought the live broadcast to a halt by storming the set, and protesters took to the streets alleging Syrian interference.

"Superstar" regrouped, but not before the quest for celebrity had morphed into a matter of national honor. Syria and Jordan both spun billboard-size publicity campaigns. In Damascus, a mobile phone company hung posters urging citizens to "Give your vote to Syria," and journalist Rasha al Atrash told *Variety* that in Jordan, "We have even heard rumors that King Abdullah ordered the army to vote." When the Jordanian victor was announced, fireworks lit the skies over Amman, and fans celebrated in the streets.

Muslim fundamentalists were less

pleased. The Islamic Action Front said that the show "facilitates the culture of globalization led by America to change the cultural identity of the people." The millions who tuned in may disagree or, more likely, not care. But if a song contest can so enflame public passion and draw charges of vote tampering, American democracy may seem far more alien than our music.

[EDUCATION]

THOSE WHO CAN'T SPEAK, TEACH

Massachusetts has handed conservatives yet another reason to oppose bilingual education: teachers who refuse to learn English. Across the state, teachers have failed a new exam designed to test basic English competency. But rather than being shamed by their marks, these teachers have launched a campaign to save their jobs. In Lawrence, 17 teachers have taken legal action against the school district; in Lowell four Cambodian-born teachers have filed complaints.

The regulations result from a ballot initiative approved by 68 percent of voters that mandates that teachers in English-only classrooms meet a "fluent and literate" standard. According to the teachers, this is too much to ask. Lowell teacher Songim Imm told the *Boston Herald* that it "came as a shock to me that teachers have to take a fluency test. ... I feel that all the work I have done for the past 20 years does not count." According to Imm, it is a simple case of discrimination: "I feel it's unfair. It's like they try to find a way to get rid of the minorities." Plaintiff Vera Tith also complains that her rights have been violated: "I came from the killing fields. I passed through. Where is the freedom? Where is the right to speak?" While these teachers may have difficulties with English, they have certainly demonstrated proficiency in the language of multiculturalism. ■

The American Conservative

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Indiana Jones & The Real World

"I'm very troubled ... at the fact so many people in the United States carry guns. It obviously contributes greatly to the crime problems we have ... gun laws should be

strengthened." So sayeth Indiana Jones, a.k.a. Harrison Ford, on location in Spain. And it is fair to say Ford's view is that of our intellectual and cultural elite.

But is it true? Is it really obvious that gun ownership and the carrying of concealed weapons by citizens "contributes greatly to the crime problems we have"? Where is the evidence?

It does not exist. Indeed, all the evidence refutes that notion so dramatically it is astonishing that folks like Harrison Ford, a man of the world, can still believe and spout such nonsense.

In 1995, Gary Kleck published in the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* of Northwestern Law School his now-famous paper, "Armed Resistance to Crime: The Prevalence and Nature of Self-Defense with a Gun." Among its unchallenged assertions:

- Law-abiding citizens use guns to defend themselves against criminals 2.5 million times a year or about 6,850 times every day.
- Of these 2.5 million self-defense uses of guns, more than 200,000 are by women defending themselves against sexual abuse. Often, a Saturday Night Special is a girl's best friend.
- 11 out of every 12 times citizens use their guns in self-defense, they merely brandish them or fire a warning shot.
- When citizens do fire, they shoot and kill twice as many criminals as do cops every year. But, while 2 percent of civilian shootings are of people mistaken for criminals, that is true of 11 percent of police shootings.

Publicized by the Gun Owners of America, these facts have been confirmed by scholar John Lott who has just published a book with Indiana Jones in mind: *The Bias Against Guns*. Its subtitle: "Why Almost Everything You've Heard about Gun Control is Wrong."

From the anecdotal evidence dug up by Lott, author of the previous best-seller, *More Guns, Less Crime*, burglars are more fearful of armed homeowners than of cops. A burglar in St. Louis colorfully explained why to authorities: "See, with the police, they goin' say, 'Come out with your hands up and don't do nothing foolish!' Okay, you still alive, but you goin' to jail. But you alive. You sneak into somebody's house and they wait 'til you get in the house and then they shoot you. ... See what I'm sayin'? You can't explain nothin' to nobody; you layin' down in there dead!"

Why do intelligent people believe armed citizens are less safe than unarmed ones? It seems to defy common sense. But Lott has discovered the reason. The media spike stories about the successful use of guns in self defense. To them it is simply not news.

Brandishing a gun stops crime 95 percent of the time, Lott learned. There are millions of such stories every year in communities all across the nation. Most often, the successful use of guns in self-defense occurs in high-crime urban neighborhoods. Why don't we read these stories? Because the media do not report them.

Going back through the *New York Times* of 2001, Lott found 50,745 words in 104 articles devoted to gun-crime sto-

ries. Only 163 words were about the successful use of guns in self defense.

The *Washington Post* had 46,884 words about crimes with guns, but only 953 words on the defensive use of guns. *USA Today* "contained 5,660 words on crimes committed with guns and zero words on examples of defensive gun use." To Big Media, bad news about guns is the only news worth reporting.

Being able to threaten a burglar or rapist with a gun is the most effective way to prevent crime in urban areas. Yet, city folks favor gun control. Why? Because they have been propagandized into believing their security lies not in having a gun but in gun control laws that disarm them but do nothing to disarm the criminals who prey upon them.

Going back through the ABC, CBS, and NBC shows for 2001, Lott found 190,000 words on gun crimes, but only 580 words devoted to one news broadcast about a cop who used his gun to stop a school shooting. Lott's chapter on the blind anti-gun bias in the press ("The Media on Guns") is itself worth the price of the book.

At journalism school, 40 years ago, we were taught, "The people have a right to know." And they have a right to know that the surest way to protect their families in high-crime areas is the possession of firearms. By concealing this truth, the media have made us all less secure.

After the horrific L.A. riots of 1992, gun sales soared, as did citizen demands for a right to carry concealed weapons. Thirty-five states have now enacted such laws, and the crime rate has correspondingly fallen, as has the incidence of "rampage killings" in these states. It is a provable fact: the better armed the citizenry, the fewer predator crimes they will endure.

Indiana Jones, say hello to John Lott. ■

War on Terror: Two Years In

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Bush administration's prosecution of the war on terror has gone wrong, terribly wrong. The toppling of the Taliban

in Afghanistan was necessary—though the government we installed in Kabul is in dire straits. There was no alternative to destroying a regime that sheltered those who plotted the 9/11 attacks.

Iraq was another matter altogether. The Bush administration started this war even though Saddam Hussein had no real connections to Osama bin Laden and nothing to do with the World Trade Center attack. It was a war that had been dreamed of and agitated for in neoconservative think tanks and magazines for years before George W. Bush's election—a grand scheme to transform the Middle East, please Israel, show the Arabs who's boss, and provide an oil-fueled bonanza for American corporations. When Osama bin Laden struck on 9/11, the neocon intellectuals who had established a base of operations within the Pentagon came forth with their plan. "Attack Iraq," they proclaimed, as a well-practiced chorus. The op-ed pages filled with calls for "Iraqi liberation." Soon enough an Office of Special Plans was set up in the Pentagon to push phony "intelligence" about Saddam Hussein's links to Osama bin Laden and his purported weapons of mass destruction. These intelligence findings turned out, unsurprisingly, to be false. But the neocons got their war, which American soldiers fought courageously and effectively—though with only one major ally and against the wishes of the populations and governments of the democratic West that had stood with the United States for the past half century.

The results are now plain. As Harvard professor Jessica Stern succinctly put it

shortly after a truck bomb destroyed the UN offices in Baghdad: "America has taken a country that was not a terrorist threat and turned it into one."

However much the Iraqi people may have welcomed the demise of Saddam Hussein, they detest the foreign occupation of their country, the destruction of their infrastructure, the collapse of law and order in their streets, the loss of jobs. It is simply human nature for Iraqis to care more about the threat of their children being kidnapped on the way to school than the putative benefits an American-style democracy might conceivably bring in the distant future. One Iraqi political party estimates that 37,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in the war, a figure that, if half true, means that many thousands of relatives are interested in revenge. In the postwar chaos, American soldiers, ill-prepared for occupation duty and lacking sufficient manpower to pacify the country, have a choice between cringing in armored vehicles or becoming easy targets for resurgent terrorism. And newly recruited terrorists are reportedly streaming into Iraq from throughout the Arab world. Meanwhile, even as the occupying force in Iraq is stretched thin, the neocons agitate for more wars—against Syria, against Iran.

According to the administration's rhetoric, the war against Iraq was supposed to make Americans safer and to bring about a transformed Middle East. But it has galvanized al-Qaeda recruitment not only in the Arab world but as far away as Southeast Asia. It is hard to imagine how George W. Bush could have presented a

greater gift to Osama bin Laden.

The road map to peace between Israel and the Palestinians—initially a promising development—has stalled and may be terminally ill. The United States may have face the fact that Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen is too weak to control the Palestinian factions and that Ariel Sharon has little real interest in a viable Palestinian state.

The results are an American Middle-East and anti-terror policy in total disarray—costing American taxpayers billions of dollars every month with no end in sight—anti-American sentiment in the Mideast rampant and escalating, and American soldiers as sitting ducks for any Muslim who wants to strike a blow against foreign occupation of Arab land.

To right the errors made by his administration, President Bush will have to clean house in his foreign policy establishment, root out those who pushed for these failed policies, and appoint sensible conservatives in their stead. As more and more Americans are coming to realize, the neoconservative project is a radical one, millenarian in style, based on the absurd belief that once Arab or Muslim regimes are smashed, Arab political culture will be transformed and desirable governments will automatically rise in their place. The roots of such error lie partially in the neocons' Trotskyist origins and a wide-eyed Wilsonian conviction that democracy is a universal panacea, tied together by a belief that the only thing Arabs understand is force. The result is a policy at once brutal and naïvely utopian, profoundly ill suited to the conduct of a great power.

The president has dug the United States into a deep hole. The next months will let the American people know whether he is the man to lead us out of it. ■

The Jihadi War

A reshaped Al-Qaeda is more dangerous than before.

By Philip Giraldi

AMERICA'S WAR AGAINST terrorism is a conflict unlike any other in history. Amorphous and multi-faceted, it spans the globe and engages United States resources on battlefields where victory can never be declared. It is above all an intelligence war, in which detailed information on opponents, their travels, and plans are equivalent to the movement of great armies and fleets in the last century. It is, moreover, a war in which victory is critical to America's survival as a nation and as a dominant economic power. But even after two years of effort, Americans are demonstrably less safe now than before, and a transformed and reinvigorated enemy may well be winning. Knowledgeable sources in the intelligence community continue to believe that another major terrorist attack is imminent.

Within the United States there have been changes in response to the security threat. It is now harder for any Muslim to obtain a visa to enter the country. Once inside the U.S., it is harder to obtain a driver's license or to register in a school or to rent a car. It is more difficult to pass through an airport or to fly on a commercial jet. Apart from that, there is little to show, even after the expenditure of so many billions of dollars. Arrests made of alleged al-Qaeda have been laughable, netting very small fish who desperately agree to plea bargain their guilt to avoid more punitive sentencing. Senior al-Qaeda have apparently eluded the net, as have any terrorist cells genuinely capable of harming

the United States. Whether they have gone underground or escaped the country the FBI does not appear to know.

Overseas, the picture is darker, though there have been some significant arrests of leaders of terrorist groups, notably the Indonesian Riduan Isamuddin, known as Hambali, and the al-Qaeda operations chief Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. But the unrelenting search for leading terrorists may not be the best way to address the terrorist problem. It is axiomatic that in times of peace, most armies are equipped and trained to fight the last war, not the next one. The same is true in matters of intelligence, where the mistakes of the past become the "lessons learned" that shape current doctrines. The Central Intelligence Agency is locked in a struggle with an al-Qaeda that formerly existed rather than

from Afghanistan, but al-Qaeda learned from the disaster and was able to transform itself, becoming in the process largely decentralized and locally self-supporting. Al-Qaeda and other Jihadi groups now operate a terrorist movement without command and control, referred to as "leaderless resistance."

In the war against terrorism, the U.S. continues to wage a conventional military-style campaign. The CIA searches for al-Qaeda leaders, for money trails, and for arms supplies in spite of the decentralization of the Jihadi movement. Recent terrorist attacks in Morocco and the kidnappings of European tourists in Algeria were conceived locally, even though both groups have links to al-Qaeda. The bombing of the French tanker Limburg was organized in Yemen, and the nightclub bombing in

AMERICANS ARE DEMONSTRABLY **LESS SAFE NOW** THAN BEFORE, AND A TRANSFORMED AND **REINVIGORATED ENEMY** MAY WELL BE WINNING.

the evolving worldwide Jihadi movement that now prevails, of which al-Qaeda is only one element. Prior to December 2001, al-Qaeda was a global organization with a leadership, financial, and logistical structure; training camps; and centralized operational planning. It was able to project its power widely and had relationships with like-minded groups in places like Indonesia and the Philippines. The United States destroyed that al-Qaeda when it drove the Taliban

Bali was planned and carried out by Indonesians. Terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia were organized by al-Qaeda sheltering in nearby Iran, not by Osama bin Laden. Attacks on U.S. forces in Afghanistan originate in neighboring Pakistan, supported by local tribesmen. Bombing attacks in Iraq appear also to be the result of an amalgam of local interests and international Jihadi. To support the terrorist activity, money is raised in mosques, religious schools,

and charitable foundations. It moves about by courier, not through banks. Weapons are acquired locally. Communications go out anonymously through Internet chat rooms. The volunteers come from the entire Muslim world. The war is everywhere asymmetrical, with the U.S. and its allies compelled to defend all targets while the terrorists need only succeed once. The United States has begun to take notice that its foes in Iraq are not all Iraqis, just as in Afghanistan they are not all Afghans, but it appears to be incapable of recognizing the root causes of the rage that fuel the worldwide Jihadi movement.

That the Jihadi have been created by the United States is one of the central ironies. The vast outpouring of sympathy for the United States in the wake of Sept. 11 has been converted to pure vitriol by the widely held perception that American self-interest leaves no room for the interests of others, particularly if those others are Muslims. America is seen worldwide as a hypocritical bully that uses the mantra of democracy to advance its own selfish ends. The clash of civilizations sought by the Bush administration's neoconservatives appears to be nearly at hand. Iraq, which was not a terrorist state, has now become one, where Jihadi volunteers are drawn as if by a magnet to confront the Americans. The concept of pre-emptive war seems a formula to overthrow all Arab governments domino style. The invasion and occupation of Iraq does not sit well around the Islamic world, while saber rattling against Syria and Iran suggests that the U.S.'s agenda is to turn the Middle East into a client state for itself and for Israel.

Israel remains at the heart of the problem. Its treatment of the Palestinians is nightly fare on television throughout the Muslim world, fueling frustration and creating a perfect environment for the recruitment of new adherents to

holy war. The "street" knows that Israel acts with impunity only through license from the United States.

Meanwhile, the CIA fights the last war. Stung by a series of scandals, the Agency became risk adverse in the 1990s. Overseas, unilateral intelligence operations became fewer while reliance on friendly foreign liaison services for usable information became the norm. Officers served in embassies that were like fortified bunkers, with few going out to test the local waters. When Sept. 11 occurred, it was catastrophic, and the CIA shared in the blame because its bureaucratic lassitude led to its failure to hire and promote the types of officers who could have penetrated terrorist organizations. Problems continue. Aggressive programs to hire native speakers of Arabic and other crucial languages are in place, but they are ham-

pered by rigid security requirements that are a breeze for blue-eyed Christians from Kansas but hell on those coming from cultures that must be peeled like an onion.

Most of all, the United States will not be able to win against the Jihadis until it removes the fuel that feeds the fire. Decisive renunciation of the universally vilified concept of pre-emptive war would be a good beginning. Justice for the Palestinians would do much to restore the impression that the United States can act internationally in an enlightened fashion. So would expeditious withdrawal from Iraq combined with a turnover to local rule, dispelling the notion that America is an imperial power.

Philip Giraldi is a former CIA counterterrorism specialist who now advises U.S. corporations on security issues.

The Coming Crescent Revolution

The House of Saud and the future of Islam

By Richard Cummings

THE EVENTS OF 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, and then the war and occupation of Iraq has set the stage for a revolution that could dramatically alter the course of history. Whether it succeeds or not, the revolution in Saudi Arabia has begun in earnest. Its object is to overthrow the House of Saud, which has ruled in Arabia for over a century. If successful, it would have drastic consequences for America, with the price of oil increasing

dramatically, as promised by Osama bin Laden, threatening the economic recovery on which Bush has staked his presidency. It would also transform the Middle East and the rest of the Islamic world in precisely the opposite way envisioned by Paul Wolfowitz in his rationale for the invasion of Iraq and its concomitant regime change. And while conventional wisdom blames the Wahabi brand of extreme fundamentalist

Islam as the cause of Saudi Arabia's problems, in reality the cause of the Saudi revolution, is a very old fashioned one: poverty.

As Said K. Aburish, a Palestinian scholar who is the author of *The Rise, Corruption, and Coming Fall of the House of Saud*, put it in an interview with "Front Line" prior to 9/11,

Since the heyday of OPEC and forty dollars a barrel of oil, the population of Saudi Arabia has increased about 70 percent. So we have a situation where the per capita income has declined [from] over \$14,000 a year to about \$4,500 a year. ... There are poor people in Saudi Arabia. There are shanty towns. There are people who have not benefited from the oil. There are people who do not go to school because there aren't too many schools. There are people who do not get medical care because there are not enough hospitals. There is poverty in Saudi Arabia. There is no doubt about it.

About five years ago, the normally passive Saudis occupied Buraydeh, a city of about 150,000 people in open rebellion against the regime. The Islamic fundamentalists "went to the top of the minarets and summoned against the House of Saud. A National Guard had to subdue it," Aburish explained. And what Americans fail to understand about Islām is that it is both a religion and a political movement based on principles of radical social justice, every bit as much as Marxism. In the postmodern world, in which the 19th-century ideologies have vanished, it was logical that a militant Islam that tapped into feelings of injustice would replace them. It also became the rallying cry against the colonialism of the former Soviet Union and of America, with their ideologues of empire. And to the poor of Saudi Arabia,

the House of Saud not only bound them into poverty; it was the puppet of the United States, which drained them of their wealth, with low oil prices, so it could live in luxury.

Corrupt and decadent, the House of Saud stood paralyzed, unable to reform itself, out of fear that any pro-Western movement would lead to an Islamic uprising, and out of an unwillingness to abandon a decadent lifestyle that was totally at odds with its professed religious principles. But the Saudi Arabian revolution needed a trigger to set in motion, and that trigger was the CIA-backed guerilla war to oust the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and to overthrow the Communist puppet government. Osama bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia a hero because of his successful involvement in that war. He had created al-Qaeda, "the base," on the Pakistani-Afghan border, where he recruited volunteers, many from Saudi Arabia, to fight against the Russians, and then demanded to fight the Iraqi army after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait so that the American troops would not be needed. His friend and mentor, Prince Turki, the Saudi Minister of Intelligence

Such was the rationale behind 9/11. What had been sporadic acts of terror, such as the car-bomb explosion in November 1995 outside the Saudi National Guard building, killing five Americans and two Indians, and the bombing of Khobar Towers in Dhahran in June 1996, killing 19 U.S. servicemen, became a well-orchestrated al-Qaeda-led revolutionary movement in 2003, starting with the suicide-bombing attack on three residential compounds in Riyadh on May 12, killing 20 people, including 10 Americans, and a firefight with al-Qaeda militants in the al-Suwaldi residential district in southern Riyadh on Aug. 11 and 12, in which four policemen were killed. Ten of the militants remain at large. The situation in Saudi Arabia has become so perilous that Britain has cancelled all flights to the kingdom.

It is becoming increasingly clear that al-Qaeda's objective is to take the Eastern Province, with its oil wealth, and Riyadh itself, the symbol of the power and wealth of the House of Saud. Militants have spread out across the country, with suspected al-Qaeda-cell members arrested in Mecca, Medina, and

AL-QAEDA'S OBJECTIVE IS TO TAKE THE EASTERN PROVINCE, WITH ITS OIL WEALTH, AND RIYADH ITSELF, THE SYMBOL OF THE POWER AND WEALTH OF THE HOUSE OF SAUD.

(currently the Saudi ambassador to the Court of St. James's) scoffed at the idea. An enraged bin Laden returned to Afghanistan as the guest of the Taliban and declared war against America from a cave in the mountains.

Bin Laden's military strategy is to attack both America and Saudi Arabia, with an attack on America deemed an attack on the American-Saudi alliance.

Suweir. It is not known how many of them there are or where they intend to strike next.

There has been some speculation that the paralysis within the royal family has resulted in a refusal to conduct operations in Jeddah—the home base of Osama bin Laden's family, the owners of the huge construction conglomerate called the Bin Laden Group—where the

absence of militant attacks has been conspicuous. It is known that some important, high-level administrators and financial and religious leaders who are close to al-Qaeda are in Jeddah. Cells are believed to move from the Yemeni border to Jeddah, where they spread out to the Eastern Province and Riyadh. But rather than go after the big fish, the government has chosen to go after lesser players in the revolutionary movement.

A reason for the paralysis could be the power of Prince Salman Ibn Abdul Aziz, the Emir (governor) of Riyadh, whose religious education by the Ulema and Sheiks, give him an aura with the fundamentalists that other members of the House of Saud lack. Crown Prince Abdullah is distrusted by the Wahhabi militants because of his pro-Western reformist stance, particularly in education. Next in line to the throne when King Fahd finally dies, Abdullah does not dare to challenge Salman, who has aspirations for the throne himself. It is likely that it is Salman who is behind the inaction in Jeddah, as al-Qaeda puts increasing pressure on Abdullah. While the House of Saud looks to America to bail it out again, Salman stands ready to become king as a benign Islamic alternative.

With a strategy to begin assassinating lower-level princes (there are 7,000 princes, all told, and a total of 24,000 members of the House of Saud), al-Qaeda hopes to break the back of a lavishly living royal family, with its vast allowances (each prince, however lowly, gets a minimum of \$500,000 a year for expenses) that is increasingly detested by the majority of the Saudi population. This is a government of extreme repression, every bit as bad as that of Saddam Hussein, where people disappear, where no dissent is allowed, and where torture is routinely used against suspected opponents of the regime. Unlike Iraq under Saddam Hussein,

women are completely oppressed, with virtually no rights. With its oil wealth squandered and saddled with vast debt, it is virtually bankrupt. To the Saudi have-nots, bin Laden is Robin Hood. They would welcome him tumultuously if he entered Riyadh on a white horse.

With no solution to the Palestinian problem in sight and with America bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan and loathed in the Muslim world, al-Qaeda is on the march in Saudi Arabia, which ironically, is now empty of American troops to rescue the House of Saud. President Reagan made a pledge that America would defend the House of Saud from internal and well as external threats. But American ability to do so has been greatly diminished by a strategy that took for granted the House of

Saud's ability to survive. That may prove to be the biggest strategic mistake of the Bush administration, one that could well unleash the forces of revolution not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in Egypt and Jordan, placing Israel in worse jeopardy than before the invasion of Iraq. Should Pakistan fall as Islamic militancy rises, a combination of oil, jets, nukes, and militant Islam would create a new world order beyond the ken of the Bush administration, a blowback to the arrogance of power that has blinded it to reality. ■

Richard Cummings served as Attorney Advisor to the USAID, Near East South Asia region. He is now working on a new book, The Road to Baghdad: The Money Trail Behind the War in Iraq.

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War Before Last

The Taliban makes a comeback.

By Srdja Trifkovic

ONLY THREE MONTHS after American troops entered Kabul, it became obvious that Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan had morphed from a mission justifiable by the Powell Doctrine into an open-ended exercise in global social engineering. In addition to “riding the world of thousands of terrorists,” President Bush announced in his State of the Union address that the United States had saved the Afghan people from starvation and “freed a country from brutal oppression.” Its women “were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school, while now they are free,” all of which is “a tribute to the spirit of the Afghan people, to the resolve of our coalition and to the might of the United States military.”

A limited military operation prompted by the reasonable desire to punish and neutralize the culprits for Sept. 11 was thus retroactively turned into a nation-building project.

Almost two years and \$20 billion later, the endeavor’s most tangible effect on this side of the ocean has been the rising availability and falling price of heroin. Whereas the former Taliban regime proved brutally effective in curtailing the production of opium, output has skyrocketed under its U.S.-sponsored successors. This year’s bumper crop, estimated at 3,500 tons, provides three-quarters of the world’s supply. Much of it is being processed into morphine and heroin inside Afghanistan—a rare exam-

ple of profitable industrial activity in the country. The magnitude of the problem is becoming comparable to that created by Columbian cartels two decades ago. The Bush administration has no solution to it, as was evident in Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s eccentric suggestion that this “whale of a tough problem” should be tackled through education. “I wish I had a quicker, better, easier answer,” he added with atypical timidity.

A better, albeit not easier, solution would be for American troops in Afghanistan to target the producers’ bosses, whose identities are well known to all. The snag is that opium cultivation and trade are controlled by local warlords who are nominally allied with President Hamid Karzai, a protégé of Washington.

Karzai—apparently decent but weak, and dependent on America even for personal security—cannot afford to alien-

cannot influence them either way—but by his American protectors. The U.S.-sponsored Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), composed of soldiers and aid workers, are as unable as they are unwilling to challenge the control of warlords over five key regions in which they hold sway.

As next year’s June elections draw nearer, the warlords appear unexpectedly eager to support Afghanistan’s “democratic transformation.” They know that they will be the only ones able to buy enough votes and apply enough intimidation to get themselves elected, which would give their power a veneer of legality at home and some legitimacy in foreign eyes. The result will be not only a glut of narcotics on the world market, but also continued lawlessness, extortion, robbery, and murder inside the country. A cynic might conclude that the place is back to normal, as if the U.S. mil-

WARLORDS APPEAR **UNEXPECTEDLY EAGER** TO SUPPORT AFGHANISTAN’S “**DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION.**”

ate local strongmen. His own authority does not extend much beyond Kabul, and only by appeasing the warlords can he maintain the appearance of the country’s coherence. In return, these disagreeable and violent men are granted impunity in their strongholds. The dispensation is granted not by Karzai—he

itary occupation had never taken place.

Some administration officials hope to help their man in Kabul by spending more on Afghan reconstruction, possibly doubling U.S. development funds to almost \$2 billion dollars a year. They argue that greater prosperity could lead to an earlier exit for American forces

and save money in the long run. They say that Afghanistan's economy has grown significantly over the past year and that the momentum should be maintained. With the mission in Iraq threatening to become a quagmire, Republicans would like to have a marketable foreign "success story" in their arsenal for next year's campaign.

In reality the economy is now barely one half what it was in 1977, and back then Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries on earth. Double-digit growth from near zero is meaningless. A big infusion of cash and American oversight cannot improve the situation soon enough to offer an exit strategy. Unpromising to start with, after 23 years of foreign intervention and domestic civil war Afghanistan is a disaster zone in which \$2 billion a year is not enough to make much difference. At the same time, \$2 billion is far too much in terms of the likelihood that such funds will be deployed productively in a country with no effective central government, no enforceable laws, and no physical security.

Pro-Taliban guerrillas may provide a reality check. The killing of nine police officers in an ambush in Logar Province on Aug. 19 is the most recent major assault on government officials (at the time of this writing) by the resurgent Taliban. Such attacks occur almost daily, and the magnitude of the problem is evident in the ability of Islamic diehards to field substantial units. Until last spring most attacks were carried out by small, squad-sized teams of hit-and-run ambushers, but this has changed: last July, for instance, some 200 attackers were reported to have assaulted a government checkpoint at Spin Boldak, on the border with Pakistan. The human cost is also rising: 60-70 deaths a week are not uncommon.

The Islamists' resurgence is partly fuelled by the nationalist sentiment of the Pashtuns who inhabit the eastern and

southern parts of the country. That ethnic group, accounting for more than a half of Afghanistan's population, resents the monopoly on power that the Tajiks of the north enjoy in Karzai's regime. Although they are hardly more Islamic or more anti-Western than any "Northern Alliance" warlord, many Pashtuns support the Taliban because it is the only tool readily available to fight their traditional enemies. To classify either side as "pro-Western" or "fundamentalist" on the grounds of their attitude vis-à-vis Karzai would be simplistic and misleading.

The proximity of the Pashtuns' kinsmen across the border in Pakistan enables the guerrillas to evade pursuers and to enjoy the safety of bases inside Pakistan's tribal areas. The situation is comparable to when the Taliban seized power in the mid-'90s: a weak government in the center, autonomous warlords in the north and the west, and Pashtun guerrillas in the east and south. According to a recent International Crisis Group report, "Unless measures are taken to address [Pashtun] grievances, there will be a greater likelihood of the political process ending in failure." One third of the country inhabited by Pashtuns is now considered too dangerous for foreigners.

The role of Pakistan is adding to the uncertainty. Some U.S. officers in Afghanistan suspect the government of General Pervez Musharraf of providing the Taliban with sanctuary and weapons after a period of hands-off caution in the aftermath of 9/11. President Bush's pretense that Musharraf—a possessor and proliferator of nuclear WMD—is an ally in the War on Terror can be understood as a political expedient, but the reality is very different. He has not clamped down on madrassas and other Islamic institutions that breed terrorists, and he has not purged the Pakistani army of officers implicated in previous dealings with the Taliban. They allow Taliban

fighters to slip across the border and to stay out of the U.S. military's reach, and they may be sheltering Osama bin Laden himself. With such friends in the region America needs no detractors.

What America needs is to declare victory, wrap things up, and get out of Afghanistan. Karzai may not last long on his own, which may be regrettable, but it is of no consequence as long as the Taliban do not return to power. That can be prevented more effectively by putting pressure on Pakistan—there is ample leverage—than by maintaining international peacekeepers in Kabul and GIs in the provinces.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. action in Afghanistan was supportable in the name of hardheaded, Jacksonian realism. Now that the mission has lost its geopolitical rationale and rests on a mix of Wilsonian millenarianism and transatlantic multilateralism, it is no longer possible for conservatives to favor its continuation. ■

Srdja Trifkovic is Foreign Affairs Editor of Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture.

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Road from Damascus

The U.S. turns its back on a would-be ally.

By Anders Strindberg

OUTRAGED BY SYRIA'S active opposition to the invasion of Iraq, the White House retaliated with a barrage of threats. What initially seemed an attempt by Washington to compel Damascus not to make trouble in Iraq quickly turned into a neoconservative vendetta. The administration has refused to reward or even acknowledge Syria's efforts at fence mending, squandering the advantages of good bilateral relations. "This behavior does not serve any discernible US interest," commented a European ambassador in Damascus, "it merely creates anger among the Syrians and resentment among the Arabs at large." Even some U.S. diplomats in the region agree that Syria is being penalized in spite of its co-operation. One Foreign Service officer ventured a brief analysis: "This is what happens when the Defense Department ideologues get to make foreign policy."

The force and intensity of Syria's opposition to the invasion of Iraq was unanticipated. In a newspaper interview shortly after the war was launched, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad approvingly predicted Iraqi popular resistance. Foreign minister Farouq al-Shara'a told reporters, "Syria has a national interest in the expulsion of the invaders from Iraq." Stopping short of aligning themselves with the government of Saddam Hussein, authorities nonetheless turned a blind eye as volunteer fighters from around the Arab world crossed the Syrian border into Iraq.

At a time when all other Arab leaders opted to sit on the fence, Syria's rebelliousness was a singular slap in the face to those who propagated the notion that a show of force in Iraq would somehow browbeat the region into submission and pro-Americanism.

Punishment was swift. Within hours of Assad's interview, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced that the Syrians were smuggling military ordnance into Iraq, triggering an anti-Syrian frenzy in Washington. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz called for regime change. Richard Perle, then chairman of the Defense Policy Board, threatened invasion and advocated crippling sanctions. Former CIA Director James Woolsey argued that bringing down the Damascus regime should be a part of the war on terrorism. The administration's neoconservatives were joined by a bipartisan chorus on the Hill calling for measures against Syria ranging from embargoes to missile strikes.

As penance, Syria was told not to interfere with the road map for Israeli-Palestinian peace; to disarm the Lebanese Hezbollah; to withdraw its troops from Lebanese territory; not to attempt to develop WMD capabilities; and to close the Damascus offices of the militant Palestinian factions present there and expel their leaders. The conflict was clearly about much more than Syria's opposition to the war in Iraq.

By late June, a U.S. diplomat stationed in Damascus acknowledged that,

as far as Iraq-related issues were concerned, "Syria has done everything we [had] asked them." The country's eastern borders were sealed. No fugitives from Saddam Hussein's regime were let in or, at any rate, allowed to stay. And there was no credible evidence that Syria was hiding the missing Iraqi WMD.

Moreover, Syria had not interfered in the road map. The political activities in Damascus of the Palestinian groups designated as terrorist organizations had ceased. (In fact, the offices of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad were shut down within a week of Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit.) Syria had begun a phased withdrawal of several thousand troops from Lebanon and had repeated its calls to the Hezbollah leadership for calm and restraint.

Washington seemed not to notice. Administration officials kept berating Syria for its "unacceptable behavior," for "playing games," and "not doing nearly enough" to comply. In mid-July, Undersecretary of State John Bolton was scheduled to testify before Congress that the Syrians were in possession of an advanced and threatening WMD program, charges similar to those that led to the war in Iraq. Following complaints from intelligence agencies that his claims were either hyped or simply baseless, Bolton was forced to postpone his testimony.

If U.S.-Syria policy were the result of U.S. interests in Iraq, the case would have been long since closed. The administration would have tried to make positive use of the Syrians' influence—as they have, in fact, offered—rather than alienating them. Anti-Syrian sentiment, however, is deeply entrenched among the administration's neoconservative advisors.

In late April, Israel's ambassador in Washington argued that the invasion of Iraq "helped create great opportunities for Israel but it was not enough ... We still have great threats of that magnitude coming from Syria, coming from Iran." The Israeli recipe: to de-legitimize and de-stabilize the Damascus and Tehran regimes "by applying political pressure and to really apply economic sanctions ..." In this vein, Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), a leading advocate of a bill that seeks to place a Cuba-like embargo on Syria, reportedly announced after a meeting with Ariel Sharon in Jerusalem in mid-August that the Israeli prime minister had "endorsed U.S. economic and diplomatic pressure on Syria"—an odd choice of words that nonetheless points to the ideological dynamics in Washington.

"We find that our strictly bilateral relations with the United States almost always run smoothly," argued a senior Syrian government official, "but that Israel and its cheerleaders in Washington ... keep on throwing spanners in the works." The charge is best illustrated by examples. For instance, the simmering allegations that Syria is hiding Iraqi WMD are based entirely on Israeli intelligence. Several senior U.S. intelligence and military officials, including, in early April, General Tommy Franks, have rejected the allegations but have been ignored by the Pentagon and the White House.

Similarly, the administration's desire to confront the Lebanese Hezbollah by putting pressure on Syria is based on Israeli concerns. "The Israelis are terrified of the Hezbollah," noted a U.S. defense analyst after returning from talks with Israeli military and intelligence brass earlier this year, "and see it as a formidable foe, a real threat." Based on these fears—and although al-Qaeda has killed nearly 3,000 Americans—Deputy Secretary of State Richard

Armitage was able to make the peculiar statement that "Hezbollah may be the A-team of terrorists and maybe al-Qaeda is actually the B-team."

When the U.S. put forces in Lebanon in the early 1980s, Hezbollah struck with lethal force. Since the U.S. withdrawal more than two decades ago, Hezbollah has not attacked U.S. interests or citizens. Shortly after Sept. 11, at a rally in Damascus, Hezbollah deputy secretary general Shaykh Naim Qasem launched a blistering attack on al-Qaeda, and the movement's leadership has repeatedly stated that it does not seek confrontation with America. Yet the White House has made its destruction a primary policy objective.

SHORTLY AFTER SEPT. 11, **HEZBOLLAH'S DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL LAUNCHED A BLISTERING ATTACK ON AL-QAEDA, AND THE LEADERSHIP HAS REPEATEDLY STATED THAT IT DOES NOT SEEK CONFRONTATION WITH AMERICA.**

The withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, another U.S. policy objective, would directly open up Syria's vulnerable western flank to Israeli attack, a real strategic concern in Damascus. It would probably also destabilize Lebanon, since the troops are there at the request of the Lebanese government to maintain inter-communal calm. The troop presence "is just not acceptable," explained a U.S. diplomat in Damascus, "they simply don't belong there and the Lebanese government says only what the Syrians want them to say." Commenting on this, a Syrian official noted, "The Americans refuse to understand that we have national security concerns also, the conflict with Israel isn't something that we just made up. They only see Israeli security requirements, always."

As for the Arab-Israeli peace process, Damascus has made it clear that it

wants to be included in negotiations. The other members of the Quartet—Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations—support Syria's inclusion, but the White House has blocked it. Israel believes that that it will be able to extract a better overall deal with Damascus in isolation, and according to one U.S. intelligence officer keeping Syria out was, in part, "a gift to the Israelis" intended to persuade them to sign on to the road map.

The continued penalization of an essentially compliant Damascus works to the direct detriment of U.S. security, particularly within the framework of the war against terrorism. The fiercely secular regime in Damascus has long moni-

tored Islamic radicalism both inside its own borders and beyond. Shortly after Sept. 11, Syria allowed the CIA to set up a center in Aleppo and made available what one diplomat described as "massive amounts" of "incredibly valuable" material. In addition to information about individuals and groups, Damascus also provided early warning of a planned al-Qaeda attack on U.S. installations in Bahrain. "We were supplying useful information in the war against terrorism. The war against al-Qaeda is our war also," a senior Syrian government official explained. "Now there is no more security cooperation." ■

Anders Strindberg is a visiting research fellow in the Transregional Institute at Princeton University, working on a book on Syrian foreign and domestic policy.

Going it Alone—and Failing

Why it is in America's interests to bring Europe back into the Middle East ... and how to do it.

By Leon Hadar

THE WAY BUSH administration spokesmen describe it, the United States has only two policy choices in trying to maintain political stability and pursue economic reconstruction in Iraq. We can either hand over the occupation of Iraq to wimpy United Nations troops and the greedy French and Russians or we can continue maintain the costly role as a dominant military power in Mesopotamia.

Indeed, according to the White House, any diminution in American hegemony in Iraq will send the wrong signal to the former Saddam loyalists, Shi'ite radicals, Arab terrorists, and the rest of the anti-American forces in Iraq, that the United States is losing its resolve and is unwilling to commit itself to the grand designs of nation building in that country and the establishment of an American Empire in the Middle East. If only America will stand tall and refuse to compromise on its principles, the rest of the world will follow. That is the same kind of wishful thinking ("If you build it, they will come") that had created the earlier expectations that the French and the Indians and everyone else would end up giving us a green light to invade Iraq.

This American stance explains why administration officials have indicated in recent days that they are not inclined to grant the UN more of a role in the occupation of Iraq. Such a responsibility

for the international body has been sought by France, India, and other countries, including by some of those opposed to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, as a condition for their participation in peacekeeping operations in postwar Iraq. The Bush administration's reluctance to facilitate military involvement by midsize powers, like India, which could have deployed close to 20,000 troops in Iraq, makes it impossible for Americans to consider bringing some of the troops back home. In a Vietnam-War-like fashion, that reticence could also ignite pressure in Washington to expand U.S. military presence in Iraq, especially if the plan to "Iraqize" the security operation in that country—another echo in the Middle East of the war in Southeast Asia—proves to be mission impossible.

The spinmasters deny, of course, that the occupation of Iraq is a unilateralist American project and maintain that the military control of Iraq is headed by a coalition representing 18 countries. In reality, the occupation forces are dominated by 140,000 U.S. troops. Of the other 21,000, more than half are from Britain, and the rest are represented by the mighty military forces of countries like Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria that are providing mostly logistical support for the American and the British forces as well as some humanitarian aid for the Iraqis. Most of these same countries are willing to help with forces to protect and

carry out relief in Iraq in exchange for American economic and military aid.

The reason some European and Third-World military powers that could have helped Washington reduce its military presence in Iraq didn't is not the lack of UN legitimacy for the occupation. Such an interpretation places the UN cart before the horses—the horses being the national interests of Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Ankara, and New Delhi.

An American reading of those governments' policies suggests that their refusal to accept the neoconservative axiom that only U.S. leadership can establish peace, order, and prosperity in Iraq proves that they are unmanly types from Venus, not ready for the global prime time. A more cynical explanation for the behavior of the French and other "decadent" nations is that they want a few lucrative pieces of the Iraqi pie like oil contracts in exchange for military assistance. That the administration seems to be favoring Vice President Cheney's old business, Halliburton, in the reconstruction or that one of the Republicans' top lobbyists in Washington, Tom Kororlogos was dispatched by the Pentagon to help run the occupation authority should only be regarded as part of Condi Rice's crusade to promote Dr. King's civil rights legacy in the Middle East.

In fact, the reason other nations have rebuffed the American request to share

occupation duty has little to do with idealism, femininity, or greed. It reflects their recognition that the American policy in Iraq and the Middle East of establishing hegemony and recreating the region in the image of the United States runs contrary to their national interests.

Even in the European countries that supported the invasion, most elites have been critical of the Bush administration's policy in the Middle East and have backed a more independent European approach in dealing with Iraq and Israel/Palestine. That explains why there is growing pressure among EU members to create a powerful and distinct military arm of the EU, as opposed to a European force under NATO (read American control), so as to permit the Europeans to act independently in the political-military arena. Hence, any scenario that assumes the deployment of French or other national military forces in Iraq will have to be conditioned on the willingness of Washington to accommodate political-security and economic interests of those governments by abandoning the project of an American-controlled Democratic Empire and a mini Israeli empire in the West Bank and Gaza. A UN umbrella would only help to formalize such a diplomatic deal. It is not an end in itself.

The European Union, in particular, should be encouraged by Washington to play a more activist military and diplomatic role. After all, for Western Europe the Middle East is considered a "strategic backyard," not unlike the way Americans perceive Latin America. Europe, unlike the United States, receives most of its energy resources from the Middle East, and it has historic ties and demographic links to the region, including large Arab immigrant populations. From the Europeans' perspective, the policies they advocate in the Middle East, including resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict and maintaining the *status quo* in Iraq

and other Arabs countries is not idealistic but realistic. They contend that the policies advanced by the Bush administration ignite anti-Western sentiments in the region, which threaten Europe's access to oil resources and radicalize their Arab population. With their geographical proximity to the Middle East, Europeans have to bear the destructive consequences of instability in the region. Americans can always go back home.

EU peacekeeping troops—led by a French general, taking over from a U.S.-led NATO force in the protectorate of Macedonia in March, playing a direct role in a region that is vital to European security—could have been an intriguing precedent for roles in other regions that affect European interests, such as the Middle East. One could envision, for example, an EU peacekeeping force between the Israelis and the Palestinians as part of an overall peace settlement or, for that matter, EU troops protecting the borders between Northern Iraq and Turkey, or even being deployed to other parts of Iraq, when American troops withdraw from that country.

FOR WESTERN EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST IS CONSIDERED A "STRATEGIC BACKYARD," NOT UNLIKE THE WAY AMERICANS PERCEIVE LATIN AMERICA.

At the same time, a more activist diplomatic role by the Europeans could include inviting Israel and an independent Palestinian state to join the EU. Signaling to the Israelis and the Palestinians that a peaceful resolution to their conflict could be a ticket for admission into the EU would be more than just enticing them with economic rewards. Conditioning Israel's entry into the EU on its agreement to withdraw from the occupied territories and dismantle the Jewish settlements there would

strengthen the hands of those Israelis who envision their state not as a militarized Jewish ghetto but as a Westernized liberal community.

But as any minor Washington insider knows, the current dominant position of the neoconservative clique in the White House and the Pentagon makes it unlikely that the Bush administration would agree to any deal involving an erosion in American hegemony in the Middle East in exchange for military burden sharing. The prevailing doctrine assumes that Washington will remain in the Middle East's driver's seat. All the French, the Germans, and the Indians can do is check the oil and change the tires, just like those Europeans representing the military forces of New Europe are doing.

As the growing costs of maintaining an imperial role in the Middle East become evident—a large military presence in the region, rising animosity toward the United States, and continuing acts of violence against Americans—public pressure could force Washington to reassess the agenda. It should recog-

nize that establishing an American monopoly in the Middle East is a costly scheme that runs contrary to long-term U.S. national interests. Instead, Washington should share with other great powers the responsibility of maintaining order in Iraq because it is in our interest to do so. ■

Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign policy studies and the author of Quagmire: America in the Middle East.

“Europe is the Faith”

How Christendom should approach its Muslim immigrants

By Uwe Siemon-Netto

CONSIDER: In Manchester, England, a radical Muslim who does not even speak English has been elected to the city council, where he needs an interpreter.

Consider: According to the German media, secret Sharia courts appear to be meting out “justice” in Italy. In that country’s north, a man known to Muslims as a sex fiend recently showed up with a hand missing. It had obviously been amputated as punishment. Italian doctors report treating Muslim women who had evidently been lashed.

Consider: In France some 70,000 young women—chiefly Muslim—are being subjected to forced marriages every year, according to the country’s High Council for Integration (HCI). Every year, too, some 35,000 girls are either circumcised or under threat of circumcision, the HCI related.

These vignettes highlight a dilemma troubling Islam experts on both sides of the Atlantic: are European governments still masters in their own house—and to what extent will the growth of their Islamic communities have serious repercussions on foreign and domestic affairs?

As terrorism expert Michael Radu of the Philadelphia-based Foreign Policy Research Institute points out, there are now between 12 and 16 million Muslims living in the European Union’s 15 member states—“more than in most Arab countries.” Given these figures, Radu wondered in a recent FPRI lecture if EU governments are becoming hostages to these minorities. Many of their members

are, after all, voters—an important point to be considered by politicians of all stripes, especially in France.

Radu suggested that this is an important factor in the deteriorating relations between the U.S. and its traditional European allies. “Will the Gulf be a permanent bone of contention between them?” he asked. And what about the conflict surrounding Israel and the Palestinians, with whom Islamism and the radical Left share a common cause? Most French intellectuals still have a pro-Palestinian bias, he reminded his audience; they are driven by an “anti-Western, anti-capitalist and romantic Third-Worldism,” Radu charged in an interview.

But that’s not all. “In certain countries Muslim communities have reached a critical mass, which pushes otherwise lucid politicians to see where their electoral weight lies. In France this is obviously the case. It could be the same elsewhere. In Germany, the number of voters of Turkish origin made the difference that allowed [Chancellor Gerhard] Schroeder to remain in power.”

It is not that the French government is indifferent to this peril. For 20 years, both left- and right-wing administrations labored to form an umbrella group for the nation’s leading Muslim organizations. They hoped to create an interlocutor analogous to the Catholic Church or the Protestant Federation—and an institute for training of imams who would preach, in French, the Koran and not politics.

Earlier this year they thought they had succeeded. Elections were held in Muslim congregations for the 50 seats on the national council. The result was a shock. The group around Dalil Boubakeur, the moderate rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris who was supposed to be the Council’s first leader, won merely two seats. But the most radical organization came in second—with 14 seats.

France has five to six million Muslims, whose young generation seems particularly troublesome, according to Radu. It is split right down the middle. Half of these young Muslims are almost indistinguishable from their non-Muslim contemporaries. “But the other half pose a real problem,” said Radu. “They reject the French identity. They reject their immigrant parents’ national identity. They see themselves not as Frenchmen but as Muslims.” And these young people—about one million—are “very vulnerable to recruitment by radicals.”

Similarly, a substantial segment of young Muslims in the United Kingdom does not identify with Britain but only with Islam. Thus, Radu said, “it is not surprising that of all Western nations it has the largest number of detainees in Guantanamo,” where the U.S. holds al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects, including nine British subjects.

In Germany, most of whose 3.5 million Muslims are of Turkish origin, the most unsettling reality is not their radicalism—but the radicalism of those who speak for them. “The Central Islamic

Council of Germany is dominated by Islamists," said Ursula Spuler-Stegemann, who teaches Islamic studies at Marburg University.

She touched on one of the West's key problems in dealing with Islam, a problem Radu also acknowledged: a goofy inclination of Western secular authorities and clerics "to talk to the wrong Muslims," as Radu phrased it. "They seek out the least moderate elements in Islamic society."

This is not an exclusively European phenomenon. In preparing for the war on Iraq, Bush administration officials inexplicably sidelined Mohammed Mohammed Ali, a remarkable Shi'ite scholar and leader in the Iraqi National Congress, who advocated a secular state providing a safe haven for his brand of Islam—and all other faiths of his country.

Spuler-Stegemann told this correspondent how this annoying "softy mentality" in dealing with Muslims gets in the way of her own efforts to help German educational authorities tackle these issues well. To hear Spuler-Stegemann, "softy pastors"—meaning politically correct clerics—seem to be particularly irksome. And here lies perhaps the greatest peril in the Western world's current Islamist challenge: if the old insight is true that the most efficacious antidote to a bad idea can only be a good idea, then Europe's and—to some extent—America's churches are not living up to expectations.

As for Europe, Radu insists it has entered a "post-religious era," which is not quite correct. Post-post-religious is probably a better description. Spuler-Stegemann and others, this writer included, find an enormous spiritual quest among Europe's young. But this thirst for God is not sufficiently quenched by clerics stuck in 19th-century theological rationalism and inclined to embrace fads.

It seems that the answer to the "Islamist problem" is a dialogue between a new and reform-minded breed of Muslim scholars, who are present but often ignored, and the equally new breed of faithful Christian theologians that is emerging on both sides of the Atlantic.

Look around. There are new sprouts of faith everywhere on the Old Continent: evangelical Anglicans in England, spiritually hungry Catholics and Protestants in France, blossoming new faith

communities in almost every major European city, including in Germany, which spawned theological rationalism two centuries ago.

That's where the future of a healthy dialogue with Islam lies—not in the cheap sellout of the faith that made Europe what it is, but in its rebirth. ■

Uwe Siemon-Netto is religion editor for United Press International.

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The Movement That Lost its Mind

American conservatism 50 years after Russell Kirk's classic.

By W. Wesley McDonald

THIS YEAR MARKS a milestone in the history of American conservatism. Fifty years ago, *The Conservative Mind*, a 450-page distillation of Anglo-American conservative ideas from Edmund Burke to George Santayana, was published. Its young author, Russell Kirk (1918-1994), then an obscure professor of history at Michigan State University, would be acclaimed as one of the founders of the American postwar conservative intellectual movement. Although the movement he helped found appeared to grow in later decades, his political and literary visibility receded from the national scene. Therein, especially for someone like me who studied under Kirk and assisted him in his research, lies a tale worth telling.

In an age of liberal complacency, Kirk issued a challenge in *The Conservative Mind* that could not be easily ignored. Others closely associated with the resurgence of conservative ideas in America quickly grasped the significance of this assault on liberal dogmas. Kirk's work renewed scholarly interest in long-neglected thinkers like John Randolph of Roanoke, Orestes Brownson, and Irving Babbitt. It also provided conservatives with coherent principles around which they could rally.

From the perspective of a half-century later, we should pause to consider whether Kirk would be pleased with what he and his book have wrought. Would he think that America has moved closer to the realization of the principles that he

articulated? Would he still recognize the movement he helped found? A platitude that lives on among Kirk's aficionados is that his book nearly single-handedly moved American culture and politics in a rightward direction. Would Kirk agree?

In a *National Review* essay (June 16, 2003) celebrating the golden anniversary of the publication of *The Conservative Mind*, James E. Person Jr., author of

lectual figure worthy of serious attention. Far from being derided in mainstream literary and intellectual circles, Kirk and his book were treated with surprising courtesy and respectful interest.

This era of good will toward Kirk shifted dramatically a decade later. Publications that had warmly greeted his work now ignored it. As *Chronicles* editor Thomas Fleming wrote in 1985, Kirk

papers. After all, he could be as harsh in his criticism of business as he was of government or labor. Nor did he praise the free market without reservation. Kirk supported tariffs to protect small farmers against the destructive consequences to family and community of a capricious global market. He deplored the ruinous destruction of the environment wrought by corporate greed and commercial excess. He could be as opposed to American military adventures as any liberal activist. Although he attacked liberal shibboleths, he showed no interest in developing alternative conservative policies. Instead, his writings focused on long-dead and frequently forgotten political thinkers and on literary figures who seemed unrelated to winning Republican victories.

The character of conservatism had been transformed. The conservative mandarins effectively redefined its substance until conservatism became nearly the opposite of what it had been. By the early 1990s, it was no longer startling to hear conservatives proclaim their support for U.S. sanctions against the pre-Mandela South African government, the social-welfare state, affirmative action, the removal of Confederate flags from public buildings in the South, open-borders immigration policies, and global democracy. The "politics of nostalgia" seemed all but dead on the respectable Right. Instead, Jack Kemp, William Bennett, Ben Wattenberg, Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, and George F. Will praised America's march toward greater equality and material improvement. This "conservatism" seemed to have little or nothing to do with Edmund Burke, John Adams, Henry Adams, and Irving Babbitt, or, for that matter, with the libertarian principles heard in the 1964 presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater. Kirk's anti-modernist traditionalism seemed as out of place among the post-Reagan generation of

CONSERVATIVE MANDARINS EFFECTIVELY REDEFINED ITS SUBSTANCE UNTIL CONSERVATISM BECAME NEARLY THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT IT HAD BEEN.

Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind (1999), describes the 1950s as a grimly intolerant period for conservatives when "liberal statism bestrode the nation like a colossus triumphant and in command of the foreseeable future, and conservatism was struggling into existence." Conservative ideas "were widely mocked as well-springs of bigotry and antiquarian fanaticism." While such allegations are still made, he goes on to explain, "[T]hey sound increasingly shrill, hollow, and silly." Person credits *The Conservative Mind* for having changed all that.

If the intellectual atmosphere of the 1950s was as implacably hostile and intolerant of conservative ideas as Person avers, would not *The Conservative Mind* have been either ignored or vilified? Instead, it was favorably reviewed in publications considered today to be leftist bastions, including the *New York Times* and the *New Republic*. *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines hailed Kirk as "one of the foremost intellectual spokesmen for the conservative position" and a "gifted" writer. His work was widely discussed and critically evaluated in scholarly books and in the national press. Even the harshest assailants of the "New Conservatism" praised Kirk as an intel-

"was well on his way, in the 1950s, to becoming one of America's great literary celebrities," but now it "would be unusual to find him mentioned in *The New Republic*, much less *The Nation*..." "Kirk's voice," as neoconservative author David Frum observed in a moving obituary, "would echo less powerfully in those later years than in the 1950s and 1960s." Even more startlingly, Kirk became a "neglected mind" among self-described conservatives. Although President Ronald Reagan saluted him in 1981 as one the "intellectual leaders" who helped make the conservative electoral victories of 1980 possible, his administration seldom solicited Kirk's opinions. Because they ignored Kirk and other defenders of civilization, traditionalist Bruce Frohnen asked pointedly in the mid-1990s whether the present generation of conservatives had "lost its mind." Frohnen believed that "conservative" policy wonks, publicists, and activists of the 1980s had lost the power to expound through reasoned discourse a morally and intellectually compelling worldview.

By the 1980s, many movement conservatives were interested above all in pursuing careers in Washington, and Kirk was not relevant for their policy

conservatives as the characteristically unfashionable dark three-piece suits he wore.

Among the most strident critics of Kirk's historically minded conservatism were the neoconservatives. They reshaped political discourse in a way that treats most of the Western past as a prelude to the present generation of democratic values and human rights. Their reconstituted conservatism left no place for Kirk, who valued great literature and art and extolled the aristocratic past. Neoconservatives focused on policy studies and social statistics, and their admiration for democratic capitalism may be traced to a quasi-Marxist appreciation of its transformative power. Rooted communities, traditions, and prescriptive rights did not appeal to them because they were barriers to personal power and political change. In the new democratic order that had emerged since the New Deal and particularly the Great Society, neoconservatives were striving to become part of the managerial elite. Kirk, for his part, had little interest in the neoconservative obsession with political power.

Many movement conservatives were puzzled by the decisive importance that Kirk assigned to culture. Since he offered no specific proposals on health care, tax cuts, foreign policy, market deregulation, or crime reduction, the bulk of his work was dismissed as little more than literary diversion. For Kirk, though, culture trumps politics. From their culture, people derive their views about themselves and their ultimate spiritual ends. Corrupt the culture, and moral and social disorder ineluctably ensues. No amount of "conservative" political victories will make any difference then. The breakup of the conservative movement in the wake of the Reagan administration and the short-lived "Republican Revolution" following the 1994 Congressional elections, Kirk

would have agreed, reflected the failure of conservatives to pay sufficient attention to cultural and moral ills. And, if he were still around, Kirk would very likely judge the fortunes of the Bush administration as afflicted with the same lack of conservative vision.

At the core of Kirk's thought lies its non-political inspiration. While he was certainly not indifferent to political events (he wrote a nationally syndicated newspaper column that ran from 1962 until 1975 and was Michigan state chairman of Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign in 1992), what for him counted most were the "permanent things," those eternal moral norms that give meaning to life. A conservatism built around a laundry list of public policy issues, he believed, would not long

endure. Moreover, his faith in the capacity of politics to cure moral and spiritual failings was, at best, minimal.

Kirk's apparent champions today paper over the widening gap between him and his modernist compatriots on the Right. The Heritage Foundation, commentator Lee Edwards proclaims, "rests securely on the ideas of Kirk, Hayek and Weaver." I am not sure which of Kirk's ideas Edwards has in mind, but I would be hard pressed to think of many to which the policy analysts at The Heritage Foundation appeal consistently. Former *National Review* publisher William Rusher asserts, "[T]he basic principles of conservatism, in particular as laid down by Edmund Burke, as articulated by Kirk in *The Conservative Mind* and subsequent books, became

CAUTION: DAY CARE MAY BE HARMFUL TO YOUR CHILD

"The debate over day care is not over, in fact, it never happened. This maddening tale is the subject of Brian C. Robertson's well-researched new exposé."

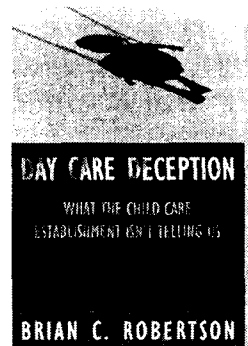
—NATIONAL REVIEW

THE CENTRAL ISSUES OF DAY CARE are often framed in a way that pits conservatives against liberals, working moms against stay-at-home moms, and feminists against traditional families. But the real conflict, Brian Robertson shows in *Day Care Deception*, is between all parents and the multimillion dollar day care establishment.

Robertson shows how this establishment works to expand its power and silence its critics. Although most reliable studies show that commercial day care has a negative effect on the emotional, psychological and even physical development of children, for instance, the day care lobby vilifies this work. It tries to silence researchers who call attention to the correlation between aggression among children and too much non-parental care. "Experts" employed by the day care industry dispute the most basic assumption of child-rearing—the mother's attention is the crucial factor in early childhood development.

Every year, as Robertson shows, the day care lobby pours more and more money into state and national elections, which is why politicians are beginning to provide more public subsidies for commercial day care at the very moment that parents are demanding options that would help them stay home to raise their children.

Day Care Deception is a brave and thoughtful book about a contentious debate whose outcome will have profound consequences for our children and our future.



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together with the principles of free-market economics ... the warp and woof of conservatism as we know it today." To which James Person adds, "That's quite a claim, but it is true."

Oh really? Person fails to understand that the postwar American Right is actually a series of movements emerging out of divergent philosophical traditions. If Kirk's famous six canons of conservative thought listed in the first chapter of *The Conservative Mind* define the essence of Burkeanism, then the heart, mind, and soul of contemporary conservatism is certainly not Burkean. In what way have any of Kirk's canons figured in recent political debates? What national politician would even risk appealing to them? Who now in public life would defend, in the words of George Santayana, "the old faiths, the old governments, the old economies, the old loves and loyalties?"

Much of what today passes for "conservatism" would not have pleased Kirk. Always suspicious of proponents of global military adventures, expansive government, and social innovation, he would have cast a skeptical eye on the ambitious schemes advanced by prominent conservatives to spread democracy throughout the world, link government to private faith-based organizations under the rubric of "compassionate conservatism," and cleanse ourselves of customs and symbols to avoid offending some perceived "victim" group. On the basis of my personal knowledge of him, it does not seem to me that he would have wanted to become the empty icon that some are evidently trying to make of him.

Do the principles espoused by Kirk operate more powerfully today in American society than when he wrote his classic work 50 years ago? I don't think so. Genuine rooted communities, intact families, and traditional gender roles were much more the norm then than they are now. The battles for prescrip-

tive institutions, civilizing prejudices, and inherited hierarchies have been, by and large, going to the Left. Even the shrinking of the industrial working class and union membership during the past 30 years would not have given Kirk any solace. In fact, working-class neighborhoods came closer to being true communities, as Kirk defined them, than do today's middle-class suburbs. Civic and church participation has declined, while the rates of divorce, drug addiction, and abortion have climbed. The loss of community, with its attendant issues of deracination and social boredom, is felt more keenly today than when Kirk first discussed this topic five decades ago.

HAVE ANY OF KIRK'S CANONS FIGURED IN RECENT POLITICAL DEBATES?

WHAT NATIONAL POLITICIAN WOULD EVEN RISK APPEALING TO THEM?

While some Kirkeans evidently want to observe the anniversary of *The Conservative Mind's* publication by celebrating the political triumphs of the conservative movement, the issue they should be addressing is why "one of the greatest minds this nation has produced during the twentieth century," as Person describes Kirk, was nearly totally ignored by America's cultural and intellectual elite during the years of his most productive writing. A dispassionate inquiry into that issue would certainly be more productive for conservatives than simply congratulating themselves on their political successes.

Still and all, the growing body of biographical literature gives telling evidence of a renewed interest in Kirk. Person's stately and informative biography would have pleased him, as would the other studies of his life and work now in progress. The Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal, which provides for the scholarly study of his work and attracts scholars from around the world,

was established at Kirk's library in Mecosta, Mich., with a branch office in Grand Rapids. Kirk's works are still in print, and several have recently been translated and republished. C-Span TV featured a retrospective on his work as part of their 2002 "American Writers" series. Neoconservatives Jonah Goldberg and David Frum, with whom he would have sharply disagreed on much, do quote Kirk approvingly and praise his achievements.

Despite changing historical conditions, Kirk is assured a permanent place of honor as a thinker who anchored conservatism in moral norms and a received culture. He recognized as the key to the

recovery of order the discovery or rediscovery of those permanent norms that give meaning to and enrich the quality of life and community. The central principles and insights of his work have a perennial significance because they address the eternal dilemmas of the human condition. Kirk strove to demonstrate a necessary relation between order, sanity, and cultural accomplishment on the one side, and, on the other, the individual's belonging to a rooted, hierarchical community. His work and teaching were pre-eminently conservative. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine how they would fit into any electoral campaign that either of the national parties is likely to run in the near future. ■

W. Wesley McDonald teaches political theory and was chairman of the Political Science Department at Elizabethtown College. His new book, The "Permanent Things" of Russell Kirk: The Moral Imagination in an Age of Ideology, will be published next spring.

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Open Range*]

How the West Was Run

By Steve Sailer

IN HIS SLOW but strong "Open Range," director Kevin Costner revives the classic cowboy movie. Robert Duvall stars as a wise and good-hearted trail boss who leads a four-man outfit wandering the unfenced high plains of the Montana Territory in 1882 in search of ungrazed pasture for their herd.

Costner plays a veteran of Quantrill's Raiders (the vicious Confederate guerilla gang that launched Jesse James's career) and a former hired gun. For the last decade, he's sought redemption, or at least oblivion, in the empty lands doing hard, honest work as Duvall's loyal partner and friend.

Their free-range grazing has tradition and what little law there is on its side, but a grasping rancher who finds it cheaper to employ gunmen (including the corrupt local sheriff) than to buy the land he's monopolizing has their younger sidekicks shot.

The heroes bury their dead and haul their wounded to the nearest doctor, whose spinster sister (Annette Bening) serves as his nurse. With the nearest federal marshal a week's ride away, Duvall and Costner resolve that, even though they are badly outnumbered because the cowed local citizens are afraid to stand with them in defense of their rights, justice and friendship demand that some killin' be done.

The Western is timely once again. Now that the Bush administration has decided to go into the nation-building business overseas, it's becoming clear that Americans no longer remember much about how nations are built, even our own. Up until about 1970, we at least could learn from the Western film, a genre that, more than anything else, was about nation building—the invention of order, justice, representative government, and a society fit for decent women and children.

Cowboy movies were prototypically about the establishing of a legitimate monopoly of violence. As the Old West receded into the distant past, however, Hollywood switched to the cop film genre, which is about maintaining that monopoly. In recent years, we have come simply to presume the rule of law, an expectation that has ill-equipped us for our stays in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The last movie Costner directed, the overblown but evocative 1997 post-apocalyptic Western, "The Postman," was also about nation building, or, to be precise,

Costner underlines the appeal of anarchy to men during the panoramic early scenes set on the endless rolling grasslands at the foot of the Rockies. Moreover, living beyond the reach of the law demands more of a man's character—his courage, honesty, and loyalty than does modern life, where the punishment of wrongdoers and enforcement of contracts are delegated to the government. Indeed, the frontier demands more of men than they can be expected to give. "Open Range" recognizes both the sadness and rightness of its passing.

One way Costner saves money is by using actors past their prime, such as the 72-year-old Duvall and the 45-year-old Bening. Duvall has been working non-stop recently, but, not surprisingly considering his age, doing little to add to his much-deserved reputation. Here, though, given a chance to reprise his character from the great "Lonesome Dove" miniseries of 1989, he's wry and authoritative.

Hollywood actresses are generally imagined to be heartless careerists, but a surprising number choose to sacrifice

LIVING BEYOND THE REACH OF THE LAW DEMANDS MORE OF A MAN'S CHARACTER—HIS **COURAGE, HONESTY, AND LOYALTY** THAN DOES MODERN LIFE, WHERE PUNISHMENT AND ENFORCEMENT ARE **DELEGATED TO GOVERNMENT.**

rebuilding: a nuclear war survivor takes the first step toward restoring the United States government by delivering the mail. Critics and audiences alike howled with laughter at the very idea.

Costner's ego has taken a beating since "The Postman," and "Open Range" is more modest. He could only raise \$26 million, one third as much. Still, you can make a fine movie for \$26 million as long as your script doesn't require an explosion every eight minutes.

a good part of their 30s—their peak decade—to having babies. The superhuman Meryl Streep can have four children with barely an interruption in her flow of Oscar nominations, but for a mortal like Bening, the four kids she had with her husband Warren Beatty from 1992 to 2000 permanently denied her a shot at superstardom.

Now 45, Bening seems perfectly cast as the Good Woman who just might civilize the 48-year-old Costner. These two

strike me as made for each other, an infinitely better pairing than, say, Grace Kelly and Gary Cooper in "High Noon," but I've given up arguing over whether screen couples have chemistry or not. That appears to be by far the most idiosyncratic aspect of how people react to movies. I think the last movie where everybody agreed the leads had chemistry was "Casablanca."

"Open Range" is rated R, ridiculously. It's really a moderate PG-13. The big shootout isn't terribly gory, the romance is chastely Victorian, and the bad language is restricted to a few appropriately bovine vulgarities. The movie industry put a big push behind "Chicago" in the hope of revitalizing the musical genre, so why is the MPAA needlessly hanging the damaging R rating on the best oat-burner since "Unforgiven"? ■

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BOOKS

[*The Unsleping Eye: Secret Police and Their Victims*, Robert J. Stove, Encounter Books, 353 pages]

The Knock at the Door

By Matthew G. Alexander

GIVEN 20TH-CENTURY scholarship's interest in all things totalitarian, it is more than a bit surprising that there exists no general survey of one of modern tyranny's pivotal institutions: the secret police. At least there wasn't one until Robert J. Stove, a versatile Australian critic, stepped forward to dispel the silence. The result is *The Unsleping Eye*, an elegant volume of roughly chronological vignettes drawn from the all-too-thick catalogue of state-sponsored domestic surveillance. As narra-

tive history, it makes for an unfailingly intriguing read. As a lesson in human nature, it provides a chilling warning against complacency in freedom.

Certain historic regimes earn their places in the ignominious litany of despotism by unanimous consent. These are well known and their depravities thoroughly discussed. Stove does treat the most infamous of these, but it is bracing to see him begin his study with an era few normally associate with official repression: Elizabethan England. History being written by the victors, Anglo-American culture instinctively decries the ruthlessness of "Bloody Mary" while in the same breath romanticizing the reign of Gloriana as England's Golden Age. "Gilded" might be more like it, for as Stove describes, there lay considerable darkness beneath the shiny exterior of Shakespeare and the Virgin Queen.

A theme that pervades *The Unsleping Eye* is the importance of singular individuals in directing and shaping the character of secret-police organizations. Consequently, Stove's Elizabethan story centers on three men: Sir Francis Walsingham, William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), and Cecil's son Robert (later Lord Salisbury).

Walsingham became the prototypical English spymaster. A zealous Protestant, he was well disposed to investigate the prime targets of secret-police attention at the time: unreconstructed Catholics. Thanks to his appointment to the Privy Council in 1573, he could order torture, which he often did, if also with distaste. According to Stove, his network of agents—typically young Oxbridge men of Catholic background—included spooks not only in England but also in nearly every major European country. (Some had a philosophical bent: a young Sir Francis Bacon, and perhaps Giordano Bruno as well, were briefly among those in Walsingham's employ.)

Among the various intrigues—real and invented—that he stopped, Walsingham's supreme coup was engineering the final downfall of Elizabeth's rival,

Mary Queen of Scots. Through a courier in his pay, a crack decryption department, and an entrapping note forged in Mary's own handwriting, Walsingham caught her and her conspirators. She was tried and convicted, but Walsingham required one final stratagem to get her head on the block. As the queen was reluctant to behead her cousin, Walsingham slipped into a stack of Her Majesty's papers Mary's death warrant, which she signed unawares. Thus consummated was, in Stove's judgment, "the sheer trickery and forging of evidence which Walsingham, to ensure Mary's execution, had carried out."

To Walsingham's second successor, Lord Salisbury, fell the honor of defeating the most notorious terrorist conspiracy in English history: the Gunpowder Plot. Officially, Salisbury discovered the plan to blow up Parliament (with King James I inside) when the Catholic Lord Monteagle turned over an anonymous letter he had ostensibly received, warning him to stay away. The authorship of the Monteagle Letter is one of history's great disputed questions. Stove's theory is that Salisbury forged the letter himself, having already learned of the Plot by other means. He makes a good case, but it would have been stronger had he considered more rigorously the evidence for other suspects, not least British historian Antonia Fraser's favorite: Monteagle himself.

From the first "Guy Fawkes Day," Stove moves across the Channel, and ahead two centuries, to Revolutionary France. This nasty, brutish period of history would seem a natural for a flourishing secret police. And so it was, the demiurgic figure being one Joseph Fouché. Our author regrets that Fouché is little known in the English-speaking world, but in this, he can take heart. Since Stove's writing (in 2001, for Australian release), Paul Johnson—in a devastating biography of Napoleon—has described Fouché in a fashion Stove would surely endorse. Says Johnson: "[Fouché] was the prototype of Himmler or Beria, ... an important element in Bonaparte's legacy of evil ..."

Joseph Fouché, arch-Jacobin and atheist, cut his teeth suppressing a 1793 counterrevolutionary uprising in provincial Lyons. Even by the extraordinary standards of the Reign of Terror, Fouché's liquidation of townspeople was remarkable for its savagery. Seventy "were killed by cannon and by musket, and their bodies pitched into the river Rhône ... subsequent victims were interred on land in a huge ditch. ... Altogether 1,910 Lyonnais perished." After an initial allusion to "anticipating twentieth-century dictatorships' methods," Stove gracefully declines to clutter his narrative with every possible Fouchéan adumbration of Communism or Nazism. Here he allows the reader to connect for himself Fouché's approach with that of the Einsatzgruppen in Eastern Europe and of such individual Nazis as Friedrich Engel, the Butcher of Genoa.

Involved in the plots to overthrow both Robespierre and the Directory, Fouché was, for all his strength of conviction, exceptionally pragmatic and adaptable. Remarkably, he escaped the guillotine and, with a few interludes, maintained power and influence throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. Once—"Jacobin to end all Jacobins" though he was—he turned on his erstwhile comrades to allay the suspicions of the ruling Directory. For Bonaparte, he unfailingly detected would-be coups and conspiracies.

Such a life calls to mind no one more than Fouché's contemporary, Prince Talleyrand, whom the Italian author Roberto Calasso has cast as the impresario of modernity for his seemingly effortless changeability in a time of constant flux. It is therefore surprising to read Stove's opinion that the two had little in common. This was perhaps true of the conduct of their private affairs, but less so of their public lives. It is Stove himself who makes this fascinating correction to the historical record on Napoleon's judicial murder of the Duke d'Enghien: "Curiously, the celebrated words [Fouché] uttered on hearing the news— ... ('It's more than a crime, it's a blunder')—have almost always ... been misattrib-

uted in print to Talleyrand." Indeed, one might go further and say that this exquisitely Machiavellian verdict is, to the non-specialist, Talleyrand's most famous and emblematic quote. Surely the two must have been more similar in outlook than Stove allows for posterity to have so perfectly confused the words of one with the other.

For the better-known Soviet and Nazi cases, Stove begins his uncensored tour of the grisly and the disturbing with earlier national models. In

the likes of Fouché. To Stove's credit, he does note that surveillance, such as it was, was stricter under the "Enlightened" Joseph II and rescues the great conservative statesman Prince Metternich from his unfairly black reputation. Still, Stove would have done better to stick to his initial idea—the seed of a trenchant critique of German unification.

His discussion of the Nazis themselves is a useful guide to the surprisingly complicated web of their secret-

AS STOVE'S (LARGELY EXCULPATORY) CHAPTER ON J. EDGAR HOOVER'S FBI SHOWS, LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES ARE NOT IMMUNE TO THE LURE OF SURVEILLANCE.

Russia, this means the oft-reviled tsarist secret police, which at least in later Romanov days comes off more feckless than fearsome. To great effect he cites historian Robert Conquest's estimates of their respective victim totals to show that Soviet secret policing was different from its tsarist precursor in degree. His portraits of the latter system's masterminds—Felix Dzerzhinsky, Lavrenti Beria—and the terrible history of the whole alphabet soup of Soviet internal enforcement—OGPU, NKVD, (most famously) KGB—demonstrate its difference in kind. Terror, indeed, was essential to the Communist project.

Germany differs from other nations Stove studies in having, prior to 1871, no centralized administrative state. As he insightfully observes, however, secret policing without such central power is nearly impossible, resulting in few if any prefigurations of the formidable Nazi apparatus. What he does find—Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa's censorship and "Chastity Commission"—is not wholly satisfying. Unfashionable though it may be to modern sensibilities, her maintenance of public morality in an explicitly Catholic state is a far cry from

police network. Few general readers realize that, unlike the Soviet system, there was no unified chain of command for all German security. Its three presiding geniuses—Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Göring, and Reinhard Heydrich—presided over a confusing, but effective, "array of diverse functions," which, "had been specifically designed to prevent anyone taking decisive juridical responsibility for anything." Crucial to understanding this, Stove takes pains to note, is to avoid the common misapprehension that the Gestapo alone was synonymous with Nazi domestic intelligence.

R.J. Stove throughout *The Unsleeping Eye* not only displays wide learning in European history and culture but also that confident familiarity with his material which comes from thorough research. His stylish prose consistently delights with illuminating literary references, pertinent anecdotes, and arresting insights. Indeed, only two minor factual errors present themselves: according to the only surviving transcript, Heydrich's successor, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, did not attend the Wannsee Conference (which adopted the Final Solution); and, as another

reviewer has noted, it was the NSA, not the FBI, that produced the Venona transcripts. (One shortcoming that is decidedly *not* Stove's fault is his publisher's failure to convert the text to American standards of spelling and punctuation.)

The lacunae in the book's coverage are, on the whole, admitted by the author. Space did not permit discussion of, for example, late-medieval Venice's fascinating, proto-totalitarian Council of Ten—with its anonymous denunciations and summary “disappearances”—which held real power at the height of the Serene Republic. More regrettably, there is little either on the East German Stasi, whose societal pervasiveness was legendary. Stove could fill these gaps in a second book, which he doesn't rule out.

It would also be interesting to hear, in a sequel, more about the literature of secret policing—Orwell, of course, but Kafka and Solzhenitsyn as well—for a glimpse into the psyches of those who live their daily lives under the “Unsleeping Eye.” “Orwellian” and “Kafkaesque” are both, in their distinct ways, adjectives we have adopted to describe the perilous disorientation of such circumstances, and a whole English sub-vocabulary derives from 1984 alone. This is a credit to Orwell's creative strength, to be sure, but it also says something about the way secret policing transfixes the imagination of free men. Judging by Stove's literary journalism, he would be more than equal to the task.

The Unsleeping Eye is arguably at its most useful in teaching us the lessons of history before we are forced to repeat them. As Stove's (largely exculpatory) chapter on J. Edgar Hoover's FBI shows, liberal democracies are not immune to the lure of surveillance. In a post-9/11 world of the Patriot Act, Total Information Awareness, and the once-mooted TIPS program (which would have enrolled millions of Americans as spies on their neighbors), R.J. Stove reminds us of the dark cells to which such well-intentioned derogations of liberty can lead. ■

[*Terrorism and Tyranny: Trampling Freedom, Justice, and Peace to Rid the World of Evil*, James Bovard, Palgrave-Macmillan, 432 pages]

The Health of the State

By Justin Raimondo

WHILE OUR PRESIDENT'S favorite word is “freedom,” his administration has disempowered judges from releasing those who have been jailed without charge, refused Congressional oversight, impounded private communications, secretly searched private dwellings, and lowered “an iron curtain of secrecy around all federal agencies.” Sept. 11 “supposedly proved that the federal government needed more power over Americans and practically everyone else in the world,” writes James Bovard, whose theme is that we have undergone a post-9/11 *coup d'état*.

The president “exerted maximum pressure on Congress to enact the [Patriot Act] with no questions asked. At the same time, the administration issued warning after warning of imminent attack.” Government officials took advantage of the post-9/11 panic to impose their regime of conformity and secrecy with frightening suddenness. A May 2003 terrorist advisory “warned local law enforcement agencies to keep an eye on anyone who ‘expressed dislike of attitudes and decisions of the U.S. government.’” An ominous development at any time, but particularly when, as Bovard explains, “the Justice Department is advocating the nullification of almost all federal, state, and local consent decrees restricting the power of local and state police to spy on Americans.”

No one is spared in Bovard's merciless review of our spectacularly unsuccessful war on terrorism. The chapter on the first such war—the one announced and conducted by Ronald Reagan, that ended in the smoking ruins of a Marine

compound in Beirut—is a history of disasters. Bovard chronicles the refusal of politicians to be held accountable for terrorist successes. No heads rolled after the Beirut disaster. The commander was exonerated, as were his civilian overseers—just as not a single high official was fired, or held in any way accountable for the intelligence failures that preceded 9/11.

Having failed to learn the lesson of the first war on terrorism, we stumbled into a second more serious and wide-ranging conflict. Its roots, however, are not in abstractions, such as the terrorists' alleged hatred of our way of life, but in blood-and-flesh realities such as the March 8, 1985 car bomb that went off in a Beirut suburb. The intended target, a radical Muslim leader, was shaken but left alive. Eighty others, mostly women and children, were killed, and 200 were wounded. The bombing, according to Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post*, was the work of CIA director William Casey, who had enlisted the co-operation of the Saudis. Retribution was not long in coming.

A few months later, Arab terrorists took over a TWA flight from Athens and executed a U.S. Navy seaman on board, as they railed that it was payback time for the Beirut bombing. One hijacker kept yelling “New Jersey! New Jersey!” as terrified passengers cowered in their seats. He was talking about the battleship *New Jersey*, which had rained down death and, yes, terror in the form of 2000-pound shells on Beirut the previous year.

Bovard's chronicle of the whole sad history of the war on terrorism, from Reagan to Bush I and through the Clinton years, is a tale of appalling incompetence. From early on a recurring pattern was established: endless prior warnings are accompanied by total denial, swiftly followed by total disaster and the refusal to take responsibility—always ending in an official cover-up. In our ongoing war on terrorism, no one is *ever* responsible for failures, neither military leaders nor policymakers. In the wake of the attack on the *USS Cole*, the Navy report concluded that “no senior officer

was to blame, instead," reports Bovard, "there were only 'lessons to be learned.'"

The sheer number—and absurdity—of the incidents described in detail by Bovard—in which innocent individuals have been charged, jailed, and held incommunicado, their lives destroyed by callous, downright stupid government bureaucrats—is a phenomenon that would have conservatives up in arms if carried out by the Clinton administration, past or future. That people were being rounded up arbitrarily to jack up the numbers of "apprehended terrorists" recalls the Soviet style of rule, where "it didn't matter how many bushels of potatoes were rotten," as long as the Five Year Plan was fulfilled. "In the same way," writes Bovard, "the success of the investigation after 9/11 was gauged largely by the number of people rounded up, regardless of their guilt or innocence."

The major complaint of Ashcroft and his defenders is that, prior to 9/11, the intelligence and domestic law-enforcement agencies couldn't pool their knowledge in tracking down terrorists. Bovard effectively exposes this lie and points out that the secret FISA courts, whose judges deliberate in a sealed chamber, have approved over 12,000 wiretap applications since 1978: not a single one has been rejected. After 9/11, Ashcroft went to Congress and demanded the right to treat all American citizens as potential foreign agents—without having to show any evidence of wrongdoing.

Congress caved, and, in so doing, surrendered practically all the historic gains won by our forefathers. "Give us the tools" to fight terrorism, pleaded the attorney general. The irony is that the FBI had failed to use the legal means at their disposal to go after Zacarias Mousaoui, the suspected "twentieth hijacker," as the Senate Judiciary Committee pointed out, because "key FBI personnel responsible for protecting our country against terrorism did not understand the law."

The administration's assault on the rights of immigrants was soon extended to an all-out attack on the rights of

Americans. Under the "Patriot" legislation, our e-mails may be read and our homes searched without a warrant and without telling us. A scuffle at a rally can result in an official designation of "terrorist" activity. And soon we will have Patriot Act II, which contains provisions stripping Americans of their citizenship and nullifying their Fourth Amendment rights by labeling them "foreign powers." Section 106 would permit the leaking of dossiers compiled on Americans provided government agents were just following orders. Section 201 would permit mass arrests carried out in secret. Section 402 would allow charges to be brought against individuals for contributing to groups that have not been designated as terrorist organizations.

Dictators by the dozen cheered as the Bush administration declared a "war on terrorism": former Liberian President Charles Taylor, for one, took to calling his critics "terrorists." When opposition leaders and journalists were arrested and tortured, after being designated "unlawful combatants," Liberian Minister of Information Reginald Goodridge replied to questions from American reporters: "It was you guys [the U.S. gov-

cult of personality centered around President-for-life Niazov. The American taxpayers contributed more than \$11 million to subsidizing Niazov, the Nero of Central Asia. Turkey, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Georgia, the Arab Muslim states of the Middle East: the only dictators not on the American dole are those few full-fledged members of the Axis of Evil. The rest we more than tolerate: we make their rule possible through military and economic aid that keeps their repressive regimes afloat.

Bovard's chapter on U.S.-ally Israel's model for fighting terrorism is a searing indictment of a nation-state that was founded, after all, by a terrorist organization, the Irgun, one that did not distinguish between civilian and military targets. While unequivocally condemning Palestinian terrorism, the author traces the long history of Israeli oppression that was more intense and effective than the Palestinian counter-offensive. Bovard documents the consequences of the disastrous policy of encouraging—and funding—the growth of Islamist radicalism as a means to split the Palestinians and subvert the PLO. The sort of "blow-back" that followed was named Hamas

AFTER 9/11, ASHCROFT WENT TO CONGRESS AND DEMANDED THE RIGHT TO TREAT ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS AS POTENTIAL FOREIGN AGENTS.

ernment] who coined the phrase. We are using the phrase you coined."

This book raises a key point: what is the difference between state terrorism and the kind of privatized terrorism embodied by Osama bin Laden? The answer is that the former has taken a far greater human toll. Even as the "ex"-Communist leader of Uzbekistan boiled his critics alive, the U.S. doled out \$160 million. In Turkmenistan, the U.S. is "bankrolling one of the most repressive regimes in the world," according to Bovard, where "the government banned opera, ballet, the circus, and the philharmonic, and closed the Academy of Sciences," while seeking to impose a bizarre

and Islamic Jihad.

War is the engine of expanding state power, and fear is its fuel: the forces that are driving our policy of perpetual war and galloping tyranny are one and the same. As federal judge Michael Mukasey said in rebuking the administration for locking up José Padilla, an American citizen, without charging him and without evidence, if such things go unchallenged "dictatorship will be upon us, the tanks will have rolled." ■

Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com and author of An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard.

[*Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, Clyde Prestowitz, Basic Books, 328 pages]

The New Isolationism

By Derek Leebaert

FROM MOST OF TODAY'S discussions of U.S. foreign policy, one would not believe that America's main connection with the world is as a financial and industrial dynamizer, rather than as some dour *imperium*. The clout of our economic and technological influence in "managing the world" goes right past nearly all of the enthusiasts in the latest debate about America's planetary role. They focus on more dramatic, easier-to-simplify concerns: special operations, aircraft-carrier deployments, allies who may be deemed to be righteously with us or cowardly against us.

It is therefore important when a humane voice, from a writer with an hospitable and receptive mind, addresses problems of trade, energy, and labor—even when placed in the strange context of having to assert that the overarching influence is the existence of an "American empire." It is additionally helpful when such issues are examined back to back with narrower national-security concerns of military intervention, weapons sales, and defensive alliances. Adding historical perspective can further enhance the discussion. That there are certain lessons in the origins of the Korean War, the rationale for the 1953 coup in Iran, and 1970s embargoes and stagflation is not a view to be taken for granted in a Washington inclined to believe that nothing like the present emergency has ever happened before.

Clyde Prestowitz offers such breadth in seeking to explain to Americans "why the world seems to be turning against them" and, in tandem, to convince foreigners why what they regard as American

bullying is in fact being done not just with the best of intentions, but with a reluctance rare in great power annals.

The result is a timely, passionate, provocative book with astute insights jumbled together with asides about conversations with this or that foreign minister, and with more historical digression than is perhaps required. Some readers may be disconcerted by what seems a hodgepodge of topics: the Long Term Capital scandal, a review of U.S. oil-industry history, uncritical discussion of Nixon's arms control deals. Other readers, such as this reviewer, will find it worthwhile to follow Prestowitz through the filigree of detail to his many hard-hitting observations.

Prestowitz is known for another best-seller, *Trading Places: How We Are Giving Our Future to Japan* (1989), and for running the Economic Strategy Institute, one of Washington's few serious think tanks. Leaving aside a previous misplaced confidence in Japan's future, his early years as a Foreign Service Officer and as a Reagan-administration trade official add an authority to his current work that markedly contrasts with much of the superficial writing since 9/11 on U.S. foreign policy. *Rogue Nation* must be admired for its honesty, meticulous research, often contrarian conclusions, and undemonstrative but serious patriotism.

A book so engagingly provocative is certain to contain arguments with which to disagree—such as the author's

entertainment technology. It is not imposing itself by force. That is the importance of America being not the world's arrogantly homogenizing master, but its great go-between, an underwriter of a marketplace of ideas.

So why does the increasingly conventional wisdom call current arrangements an "empire"? Because it is good theater, not good thought. We all know the U.S. is unique as a world power—which doesn't make it an imperial one. When even a savvy critic such as Prestowitz accepts an obviously significant fact and tries to convert it to dramatic argument, we know that more than a few Americans are confused about the ways their country is exercising its muscle.

He is more interesting when confronting problems of trade and American "unilateralism." He correctly reminds us that there is still much hypocrisy about free trade in Washington (as shown in part by the agricultural policies of a noisily free-trade administration) and among ourselves as a society: the people who frequent think-tank seminars and read political-opinion magazines are unlikely to be the ones losing jobs amid the industrial restructuring of globalization. For now, those just out of work are generally displaced from the margin of the world's surge of development, such as athletic-shoe manufacturers; within 10 years they are likely to include American software developers, accountants, and chip designers.

MORE THAN A FEW AMERICANS ARE CONFUSED ABOUT THE WAYS THEIR COUNTRY IS EXERCISING ITS MUSCLE.

repeated references to an "American empire," as if such a thing existed. America's role in the world represents a liberal ascendancy, not an empire, no matter how defined. Our presence worldwide is one based on imitation, not enforcement. The U.S. is being pulled into places around the world because of its success—in business, science, and

The rest of the world will become increasingly competitive against ever-larger slices of the directly productive U.S. economy. This cannot be avoided and will both mightily benefit consumers and increase global prosperity. If we think the country is unpopular today, as the global engine of growth, America would be far more disliked for "unilater-

alism" should it erect higher barriers to the flow of goods and services on which the poorest countries rely to finance their entry into modernity. Protectionist fine-tuning of the world economy is unlikely to be subtle enough to ensure both widespread economic dynamism and job creation—job security having faded at least with the computer revolution.

Conceivably people in the Third World may be angry over seemingly unilateral U.S. military moves, such as those involving Iraq. But such anger passes, particularly as they have few illusions about the moral qualities of Third-World leaders. When the United States obstructs their selling opportunities, as has been done with, say, textiles, rage can be more enduring.

The notion that the country should adapt its pace to the speed of citizens least adjusted to the world economy is false humanity and crazed economics. It reduces our overall capacity to create wealth. It builds inefficiencies into the world economy, and it will work against U.S. security in a more physically dangerous world. Like all attempts to smother price mechanisms, trade barriers work against the very people—those left behind—about whom Prestowitz is rightly compassionate.

Along the fronts of American confrontation with the world are controversies involving the environment, fuel consumption, the International Criminal Court, a landmine treaty, and small arms limitations. They all stand out in a gloomy landscape where, the author observes, America is out of step with Europe. Agreed, but the main question is whether being "in step" with Europe is a good idea. Europe is a civilized place, but hardly a model of efficient growth or self-reliance.

Yes, America is an immense consumer of fossil fuels and other resources. This is certainly a serious issue, and a technical one, which means it cannot be addressed in the breezy moral terms that European critics favor and to which Prestowitz seems sympathetic. America is a pioneering country, and pioneers are rarely economical. Excess is among the

standard consequences of being a huge, sparsely populated, intensely hard-working nation on the cutting edge of modernity. Calling for "a Manhattan Project for alternative energy" is goodhearted but imprecise, like a "war on poverty." The Manhattan Project knew that it had to establish sustained U-235 and plutonium fission—and before the true evildoers did. Such clarity of purpose and product is exactly what "alternative energy" still totally lacks.

Europeans (and other citizens of the world) may produce treaty drafts that presume to restrict civilian gun ownership, as occurred two years ago when the UN addressed trade in small arms. The Bush administration had credible reservations, which Prestowitz strangely describes as "the sacred right of every American to own an AK-47." That is not what U.S. opposition was about: although, of course, such a sacred right to own an AK-47 indeed exists, at least in the semi-automatic version.

Prestowitz discerns a sense of alienation, fear, and even betrayal directed against the United States as the world looks at a dramatic relative growth in U.S. power. "Betrayal" raises the question of what was promised that was not delivered. Refusal to co-operate on issues like Kyoto or landmines may or may not be a bad idea. But it is not betrayal. European governments have refused to go along with the United States when they disagreed on certain issues. America can certainly do the same. Europeans may say they feel "betrayed," but such moral rhetoric is to be expected when a weaker party seeks to dramatize its discontents.

Why did nearly all the world grieve with America right after 9/11, he asks, and why may there now be a dangerous gap in sentiments? The simple answer is that it is easier to like someone when they are hurt or vulnerable. It is precisely America's power of regeneration that Europeans find so unsettling.

When we consider world opinion of America as a "rogue nation," it is significant that the industrial democracy least like the United States—Japan, which

never sees America as a looking glass—is making the least fuss. Nor is much fuss being made by the industrial democracy most like us—Britain, which has finally recognized that it has more to learn than to teach. This leaves a spectrum of puzzled, worried, aging democracies whose disappointments are often projected on a country that cannot always be right but that always seems to be more dynamic. Such recurring tensions are part of the price of getting things done, as America has known at least since its first serious postwar quarrels with the recovering democracies starting in 1946. As America changes the world—whether it wants to or not—the nation will be changed by the world as well. ■

Derek Leebaert is CEO of Intellicue, Inc. His latest book is The Fifty-Year Wound: How America's Cold War Victory Shapes Our World. His next book Special Military Operations and the Vulnerability of Civilizations, will be published in fall 2004.

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J. Lo & the B-Listers

This is good. Very, very good. Scientists recently reported that Celebrity Worship Syndrome, or CWS, is a new ailment apparently afflicting one person out of three.

(I assume the scientists mean one in three in the Western world, as I don't believe too many Iraqis right now are worried about Jennifer Lopez's ample derriere and whether in outline, dimensions, and mobility it is more or less attractive than that of the Australian chanteuse Kylie Minogue.) The experts warn that following the twists and turns of, say, Britney Spears, increases the likelihood of psychological disorders. And I thought the poor Liberians had it bad. Using the Celebrity Attitude Scale, two profs, Lunn McCutcheon and James Houran, devised a test to measure interest in the stars, thus making us understand what celebrity worship is all about. (Give these two a Nobel Prize!) Reporting their findings, *New Scientist* magazine says the implications are that "if you can't keep your nose out of *Vanity Fair* magazine, you could be headed for big trouble."

And it gets better. The scientists warn that the syndrome is on the increase and that it affects people of all ages and both sexes. The condition appears harmless at the start—as in David Frum's celebrity worship of Paul Wolfowitz and William Kristol's of Rupert Murdoch—but it carries the danger of escalating into an unhealthy obsession. The next stage, which affects one in 10, is developing "intense personal" attitudes towards a star, such as a belief in a special bond with the celebrity—as in Sid Blumenthal's feelings towards Bill and Hillary Clinton. Finally, at its most intense, CWS turns "borderline patholog-

ical," which includes those prepared to harm themselves or others in the name of their idol—as in Donald Rumsfeld's intense efforts to impress Napoleon Bonaparte.

In primitive societies, early human beings would have watched and copied the best hunters. Then came the Greeks, who tried to copy excellence. Now we have fame and fortune as the only indicators of success, so we turn to celebrities. Mind you, it was the Greeks who started it, with Alexander the Great. He was the first beautiful person, the first world celebrity, the god-king who exploited his fame throughout the known world, a world he had conquered (He is due for a revival and is set to be played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Colin Farrell in two Hollywood blockbusters.) Well, I am sure Leonardo and Colin can-

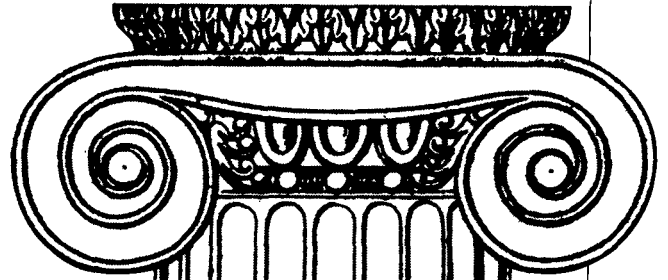
get involved in a threesome because PETA would have boycotted the movie.) Hanky-panky with Paris begins in Athens, but then she's forced to marry King Menelaus ... you get the picture. Once the javelin throwing between Greeks and Trojans begins in earnest, Kern goes ape. Achilles is portrayed as a bald, camp, steroid-juiced, muscle-bound queen. Agamemnon rapes Helen in front of Menelaus to teach her a lesson after Troy has been sacked. It is so grotesque one feels like learning Greek and reading the *Iliad* in the original.

But back to celebrity worship and a writer by the name of Michael Wolff. Wolff covers the media in *New York* magazine, a weekly that covers restaurants, the Hamptons, best buys, and, of course, celebrities. It is read by those Biancas of the Bronx who yearn to learn what's hot in the Big Bagel. It is as unreadable as it is snide in its coverage of celebrity wannabes like Lizzie Grubman, whose claim to fame consists of running down 16 people in her SUV after

OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH FAME IS VERY BAD FOR OUR HEALTH, AND NOW SCIENCE HAS PROVED IT.

not do worse than the recent television mini-series about the Trojan War. The screenwriter was one Ronni Kern, a woman so obviously disturbed, she decided to improve Homer's script with a bit of new-age guruism and holistic ambience. Helen of Troy is presented as a woman whose mother committed suicide after being raped by Zeus. When Helen finds out, she has a nervous breakdown and takes off with Theseus to Athens. (No, the Minotaur does not

being denied a parking place at a nightclub. Wolff is also snide, but he takes himself seriously as a media wonk and occasionally generates publicity by asking embarrassing questions about Iraq during press conferences. (It's the oldest trick in the book and the easiest way of making the evening news.) Last month Wolff wrote glowingly about the liberal power elite (his words) he hobnobbed with at the Aspen Institute conference, i.e., overachieving CEOs, various U.S.



governors and members of Congress, assorted journalists, and ... Bill Clinton.

Here's our man Wolff: "The opening panel at the first evening's dinner featured several estimables, including Madeleine Albright, a Singaporean diplomat, and a token (not too bright) member of the Bush administration ... And Wesley Clark. The vibe was as powerful in the room as if you had a panel of B-listers and then, say, J.Lopez. The intensity was of one mind. Clark was the romantic figure here. He held the collective crush." See what I mean about CWS affecting our boy? The reference to J.Lo. and B-listers? This man belongs in Hollywood. "He was precise and clear and overarching as a panelist ... the victor of Kosovo." (Some victor from 15,000 feet.) Wolffie soon after goes weak at the knees, reminding me of the bobbysoxers I used to see during my youth fainting over Frank Sinatra: "The psychic heart of the conference was Bill Clinton. He was interviewed on the second day by Walter Isaacson, who began by telling a story about how when he was a Rhodes scholar he'd done a paper that his Oxford professor had said was not at all in the same league as a similar paper written by a certain Rhodes scholar from Arkansas a few years before. This was one of those overachievement-upon-overachievement stories that was bound to subdue anyone."

Although it's supposed to be a media column, this sounds a bit like *Vanity Fair* meeting Hugh Grant, *n'est pas*? Wolfie goes on: "Clinton had lost weight and—with a great collection of just-out-of-the-wrapper pastel-colored polo shirts on view throughout the conference—seemed in fabulous form. ... Clinton was not just the beloved former president, but

he had become some sort of sassy oracle." Now I don't wish to be rude about Wolff, a man I've never met and have read only sparingly. He could be making fun, but I don't think so. He is suffering from CWS in its mildest form, but it's still CWS. Wolff is a liberal who has every right to kiss Clinton's derriere, but it's Clinton as a celebrity whom he worships.

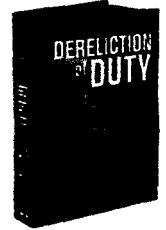
I wonder what he will write when this Boudin woman goes on the lecture circuit? About her clothes? Her hairstyle? Her prison chic? Katherine Boudin—a graduate of Bryn Mawr, as the papers never grew tired of repeating—was freed after serving 22 years in prison for taking part in an armed robbery that led to the killing of two police officers and one security guard. Nine children were orphaned, yet the Yale faculty urged granting parole, citing her commitment to education. One thing is for sure: Sirhan Sirhan, still in prison after 35 years for the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, will not be getting any testimonials from the Yalies any time soon.

Boudin has been a minor celebrity throughout her grotesque life. Her old man is described as a Left-leaning lawyer but was in fact a member of the Communist Party. Her grandfather, Louis Boudin, helped found the U.S. Communist Party. Nothing wrong with that, except that lefties and celebrities go hand in hand. HIV/AIDS, women's health programs, adult-literacy programs, Hollywood, Jennifer Lopez, Robert Redford, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, the Yale faculty ... they all somehow go together. And, of course, the biggest celebrity is the phoniest of them all, William Jefferson Clinton. Our love affair with fame is very bad for our health, and now science has proved it. ■



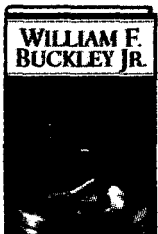
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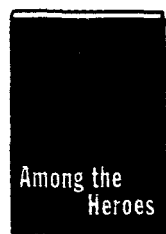
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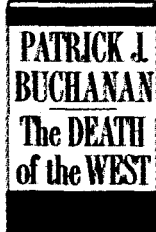
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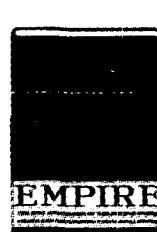
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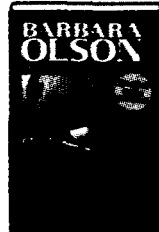
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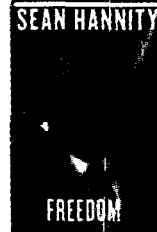
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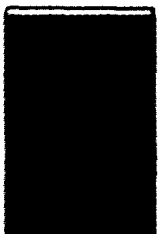
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